COLLECTED POEMS
Walter de la Mare

WALTER DE LA MARE

COLLECTED POEMS

With decorations by Berthold Wolpe

FABER & FABER

This edition
first published in Mcmxlii
by Faber and Faber Limited
24 Russell Square London W.C. 1
Second impression November Mcmxlii
Third impression September Mcmxliii
Fourth impression March Mcmxliv
Fifth impression September Mcmxliv
Sixth impression September Mcmxlv
Printed in Great Britain by
R. MacLehose and Company Limited
The University Press Glasgow

NOTE

This volume contains the Collections entitled *Poems* (1906), *The Listeners*, *Motley*, *The Veil*, *The Fleeting*—as these were reprinted in *Poems: 1901 to 1918* (Volume I) and in *Poems: 1919 to 1934*—and *Memory*. Nothing from *Songs of Childhood*, *Peacock Pie*, *Bells and Grass*, and no other rhymes primarily intended for children have been included; nor is there anything from *Ding Dong Bell*. I have made very few revisions.

Nor have I attempted to sift out what I should prefer to exclude, and certainly not what would have been left to blush unseen by a finer taste and judgment. The one enterprise would have revealed in detail *how* fond a paternal affection may be; the other, even if it had been practicable, might have resulted in—well, the slimmest of pamphlets, and that all but wholly compassionate. Time will soon see to all that.

As for the arrangement of what is here, there were two clear alternatives. One of them was merely to reprint the separate collections in their order of publication. Since, however, none of these subsequent to *Poems* was restricted to any particular period, and many pieces are now past dating, a strict chronological order was out of the question. The other method was to ignore dates and to rearrange the poems throughout. I decided on a compromise. The poems have been rearranged in sections; but with few exceptions the contents of each section follow the order in publication of the volumes in which they originally appeared. It is a small matter, but it may be worth this word of explanation.

CONTENTS

I

IV

V

VI

VII

VIII

IX

X

XI

XII

EVENING

When twilight darkens, and one by one,
The sweet birds to their nests have gone;
When to green banks the glow-worms bring
Pale lamps to lighten evening;
Then stirs in his thick sleep the owl,
Through the dewy air to prowl.

Hawking the meadows, swiftly he flits,
While the small mouse a-trembling sits
With tiny eye of fear upcast
Until his brooding shape be past,
Hiding her where the moonbeams beat,
Casting black shadows in the wheat.

Now all is still: the field-man is
Lapped deep in slumbering silentness.
Not a leaf stirs, but clouds on high
Pass in dim flocks across the sky,
Puffed by a breeze too light to move
Aught but these wakeful sheep above.

O, what an arch of light now spans
These fields by night no longer Man's!
Their ancient Master is abroad,
Walking beneath the moonlight cold:
His presence is the stillness, He
Fills earth with wonder and mystery.

NIGHT

All from the light of the sweet moon
Tired men now lie abed;
Actionless, full of visions, soon
Vanishing, soon sped.

The starry night aflock with beams
Of crystal light scarce stirs:
Only its birds—the cocks, the streams,
Call 'neath heaven's wanderers.

All's silent; all hearts still;
Love, cunning, fire, fallen low:
When faint morn straying on the hill
Sighs, and his soft airs flow.

APRIL

Come, then, with showers; I love thy cloudy face
Gilded with splendour of the sunbeams thro'
The heedless glory of thy locks. I know
The arch, sweet languor of thy fleeting grace,
The windy lovebeams of thy dwelling-place,
Thy dim dells where in azure bluebells blow,
The brimming rivers where thy lightnings go
Harmless and full and swift from race to race.

Thou takest all young hearts captive with thine eyes;
At rumour of thee the tongues of children ring
Louder than bees; the golden poplars rise
Like trumps of peace; and birds, on homeward wing,
Fly mocking echoes shrill along the skies,
Above the waves' grave diapasoning.

SEA-MAGIC

TO R. I.

My heart faints in me for the distant sea.
  The roar of London is the roar of ire
  The lion utters in his old desire
For Libya out of dim captivity.

The long bright silver of Cheapside I see,
  Her gilded weathercocks on roof and spire
  Exulting eastward in the western fire;
All things recall one heart-sick memory:—

Ever the rustle of the advancing foam,
  The surges' desolate thunder, and the cry
  As of some lone babe in the whispering sky;
Ever I peer into the restless gloom
  To where a ship clad dim and loftily
Looms steadfast in the wonder of her home.

THE THREE CHERRY TREES

There were three cherry trees once,
  Grew in a garden all shady;
And there for delight of so gladsome a sight,
  Walked a most beautiful lady,
  Dreamed a most beautiful lady.

  Birds in those branches did sing,
  Blackbird and throstle and linnet,
But she walking there was by far the most fair—
  Lovelier than all else within it,
  Blackbird and throstle and linnet.

  But blossoms to berries do come,
  All hanging on stalks light and slender,
And one long summer's day charmed that lady away,
  With vows sweet and merry and tender;
  A lover with voice low and tender.

Moss and lichen the green branches deck;
  Weeds nod in its paths green and shady:
Yet a light footstep seems there to wander in dreams,
  The ghost of that beautiful lady,
  That happy and beautiful lady.

THE BELLS

Shadow and light both strove to be
The eight bell-ringers' company,
As with his gliding rope in hand,
Counting his changes, each did stand;
While rang and trembled every stone,
To music by the bell-mouths blown:
Till the bright clouds that towered on high
Seemed to re-echo cry with cry.
Still swang the clappers to and fro,
When, in the far-spread fields below,
I saw a ploughman with his team
Lift to the bells and fix on them
His distant eyes, as if he would
Drink in the utmost sound he could;
While near him sat his children three,
And in the green grass placidly
Played undistracted on: as if
What music earthly bells might give
Could only faintly stir their dream,
And stillness make more lovely seem.
Soon night hid horses, children, all,
In sleep deep and ambrosial.
Yet, yet, it seemed, from star to star,
Welling now near, now faint and far,
Those echoing bells rang on in dream,
And stillness made even lovelier seem.

THE SCARECROW

All winter through I bow my head
  Beneath the driving rain;
The North Wind powders me with snow
  And blows me black again;
At midnight in a maze of stars
  I flame with glittering rime,
And stand, above the stubble, stiff
  As mail at morning-prime.
But when that child, called Spring, and all
  His host of children, come,
Scattering their buds and dew upon
  These acres of my home,
Some rapture in my rags awakes;
  I lift void eyes and scan
The skies for crows, those ravening foes,
  Of my strange master, Man.
I watch him striding lank behind
  His clashing team, and know
Soon will the wheat swish body high
  Where once lay sterile snow;
Soon shall I gaze across a sea
  Of sun-begotten grain,
Which my unflinching watch hath sealed
  For harvest once again.

WINTER

Clouded with snow
  The bleak winds blow,
And shrill on leafless bough
The robin with its burning breast
  Alone sings now.

  The rayless sun,
  Day's journey done,

Sheds its last ebbing light
On fields in leagues of beauty spread
  Unearthly white.

  Thick draws the dark,
  And spark by spark,
The frost-fires kindle, and soon
Over that sea of frozen foam
  Floats the white moon.

THERE BLOOMS NO BUD IN MAY

There blooms no bud in May
  Can for its white compare
With snow at break of day,
  On fields forlorn and bare.

For shadow it hath rose,
  Azure, and amethyst;
And every air that blows
  Dies out in beauteous mist.

It hangs the frozen bough
  With flowers on which the night
Wheeling her darkness through
  Scatters a starry light.

Fearful of its pale glare
  In flocks the starlings rise;
Slide through the frosty air,
  And perch with plaintive cries.

Only the inky rook,
  Hunched cold in ruffled wings,
Its snowy nest forsook,
  Caws of unnumbered Springs.

NOON AND NIGHT FLOWER

Not any flower that blows
But shining watch doth keep;
Every swift changing chequered hour it knows
Now to break forth in beauty; now to sleep.

This for the roving bee
Keeps open house, and this
Stainless and clear is, that in darkness she
May lure the moth to where her nectar is.

Lovely beyond the rest
Are these of all delight:—
The tiny pimpernel that noon loves best,
The primrose palely burning through the night.

One 'neath day's burning sky
With ruby decks her place,
The other when eve's chariot glideth by
Lifts her dim torch to light that dreaming face.

THE LINNET

Upon this leafy bush
With thorns and roses in it,
Flutters a thing of light,
A twittering linnet,
And all the throbbing world
Of dew and sun and air
By this small parcel of life
Is made more fair:
As if each bramble-spray
And mounded gold-wreathed furze,
Harebell and little thyme,
Were only hers;
As if this beauty and grace
Did to one bird belong,
And, at a flutter of wing,
Might vanish in song.

THE SUNKEN GARDEN

Speak not—whisper not;
Here bloweth thyme and bergamot;
Softly on the evening hour,
Secret herbs their spices shower.
Dark-spiked rosemary and myrrh,
Lean-stalked, purple lavender;
Hides within her bosom, too,
All her sorrows, bitter rue.

Breathe not—trespass not;
Of this green and darkling spot,
Latticed from the moon's beams,
Perchance a distant dreamer dreams;
Perchance upon its darkening air,
The unseen ghosts of children fare,
Faintly swinging, sway and sweep,
Like lovely sea-flowers in the deep;
While, unmoved, to watch and ward,
Amid its gloomed and daisied sward,
Stands with bowed and dewy head
That one little leaden Lad.

THE RIDDLERS

'Thou solitary!' the Blackbird cried,
'I, from the happy Wren,
Linnet and Blackcap, Woodlark, Thrush,
Perched all upon a sweetbrier bush,
Have come at cold of midnight-tide
To ask thee, Why and when
Grief smote thy heart so thou dost sing
In solemn hush of evening,
So sorrowfully, lovelorn Thing—
Nay, nay, not sing, but rave, but wail,
Most melancholy Nightingale?

Do not the dews of darkness steep
All pinings of the day in sleep?
Why, then, when rocked in starry nest
We mutely couch, secure, at rest,
Doth thy lone heart delight to make
Music for sorrow's sake?'

A Moon was there. So still her beam,
It seemed the whole world lay in dream,
Lulled by the watery sea.
And from her leafy night-hung nook
Upon this stranger soft did look
The Nightingale: sighed he:—

"Tis strange, my friend; the Kingfisher
But yestermorn conjured me here
Out of his green and blue to say
Why thou, in splendour of the day,
Wearest, of colour, but bill gold-gay,
And else dost thee array
In a most sombre suit of black?
'Surely,' he sighed, 'some load of grief,
Past all our thinking—and belief—
Must weigh upon his back!'
Do, then, in turn, tell me, If joy
Thy heart as well as voice employ,
Why dost thou now, most Sable, shine
In plumage woefuller far than mine?
Thy silence is a sadder thing
Than any dirge I sing!'

Thus, then, these two small birds, perched there,
Breathed a strange riddle both did share
Yet neither could expound.
And we—who sing but as we can,
In the small knowledge of a man—
Have we an answer found?
Nay, some are happy whose delight
Is hid even in themselves from sight;

And some win peace who spend
The skill of words to sweeten despair
Of finding consolation where
Life has but one dark end;
Who, in rapt solitude, tell o'er
A tale as lovely as forelore,
Into the midnight air.

THE REAWAKENING

Green in light are the hills, and a calm wind flowing
  Filleth the void with a flood of the fragrance of Spring;
Wings in this mansion of life are coming and going,
  Voices of unseen loveliness carol and sing.

Coloured with buds of delight the boughs are swaying,
  Beauty walks in the woods, and wherever she rove
Flowers from wintry sleep, her enchantment obeying,
  Stir in the deep of her dream, reawaken to love.

Oh, now begone, sullen care—this light is my seeing;
  I am the palace, and mine are its windows and walls;
Daybreak is come, and life from the darkness of being
  Springs, like a child from the womb, when the lonely one calls.

THE VACANT DAY

As I walked out in meadows green
  I heard the summer noon resound
With call of myriad things unseen
  That leapt and crept upon the ground.

High overhead the windless air
  Throbbed with the homesick coursing cry
Of swifts that ranging everywhere
  Woke echo in the sky.

Beside me, too, clear waters coursed
  Which willow branches, lapsing low,
Breaking their crystal gliding forced
  To sing as they did flow.

I listened; and my heart was dumb
  With praise no language could express;
Longing in vain for him to come
  Who had breathed such blessedness

On this fair world, wherein we pass
  So chequered and so brief a stay;
And yearned in spirit to learn, alas,
  What kept him still away.

THE FLIGHT

How do the days press on, and lay
  Their fallen locks at evening down,
While the clear stars in darkness play
    And moonbeams weave a crown—

A crown of flower-like light in heaven,
  Where in the hollow arch of space
Morn's mistress dreams, and the Pleiads seven
    Stand watch about her place.

Stand watch—O days, no number keep
  Of hours when this dark clay is blind.
When the world's clocks are dumb in sleep
    'Tis then I seek my kind.

THE WILLOW

Leans now the fair willow, dreaming
Amid her locks of green.
In the driving snow she was parched and cold,
And in midnight hath been
Swept by blasts of the void night,
Lashed by the rains.
Now of that wintry dark and bleak
No memory remains.

In mute desire she sways softly;
Thrilling sap up-flows;
She praises God in her beauty and grace,
Whispers delight. And there flows
A delicate wind from the Southern seas,
Kissing her leaves. She sighs.
While the birds in her tresses make merry;
Burns the Sun in the skies.

TITMOUSE

If you would happy company win,
Dangle a palm-nut from a tree,
Idly in green to sway and spin,
Its snow-pulped kernel for bait; and see
A nimble titmouse enter in.

Out of earth's vast unknown of air,
Out of all summer, from wave to wave,
He'll perch, and prank his feathers fair,
Jangle a glass-clear wildering stave,
And take his commons there—

This tiny son of life; this spright,
By momentary Human sought,
Plume will his wing in the dappling light,
Clash timbrel shrill and gay—
And into Time's enormous Nought,
Sweet-fed, will flit away.

THE MOTH

Isled in the midnight air,
Musked with the dark's faint bloom,
Out into glooming and secret haunts
    The flame cries, 'Come!'

Lovely in dye and fan,
A-tremble in shimmering grace,
A moth from her winter swoon
    Uplifts her face:

Stares from her glamorous eyes;
Wafts her on plumes like mist;
In ecstasy swirls and sways
    To her strange tryst.

DAWN

Near, far, unearthly, break the birds
From spectral bush and tree,
Into a strange and drowsy praise,
The flush of dawn to see.

Old ashen rooks, on ragged wing,
And heads with sidling eye,
Sweep in the silvery heights of daybreak,
Silent through the sky.

The restless robin—like a brook
Tinkling in frozen snow—
Shakes his clear, sudden, piercing bells,
Flits elf-like to and fro.

Cock to cock yells, the enormous earth
Lies like a dream outspread
Under the canopy of space,
Stretched infinite overhead.

Light on the wool-fleeced ewes pours in;
Meek-faced, they snuff the air;
The glint-horned oxen sit agaze;
The east burns orient-fair.

The milk-white mists of night wreathe up
From meadows greenly grey—
Their every blade of grass ablaze
With dewdrops drenched in day.

THE SPARK

Calm was the evening, as if asleep,
But sickled on high with brooding storm,
Couched in invisible space. And, lo!
I saw in utter silence sweep
Out of that darkening starless vault
A gliding spark, as blanched as snow,
That burned into dust, and vanished in
A hay-cropped meadow, brightly green.

A meteor from the cold of space,
Lost in Earth's wilderness of air?—
Presage of lightnings soon to shine
In splendour on this lonely place?—
I cannot tell; but only how fair
It glowed within the crystalline
Pure heavens, and of its strangeness lit
My mind to joy at sight of it.

Yet what is common as lovely may be:
The petalled daisy, a honey bell,
A pebble, a branch of moss, a gem
Of dew, or fallen rain—if we
A moment in their beauty dwell;
Entranced, alone, see only them.
How blind to wait, till, merely unique,
Some omen thus the all bespeak!

JENNY WREN

Of all the birds that rove and sing,
Near dwellings made for men,
None is so nimble, feat, and trim
As Jenny Wren.

With pin-point bill, and a tail a-cock,
So wildly shrill she cries,
The echoes on their roof-tree knock
And fill the skies.

Never was sweeter seraph hid
Within so small a house—
A tiny, inch-long, eager, ardent,
Feathered mouse.

THE SNAIL

All day shut fast in whorled retreat
You slumber where—no wild bird knows;
While on your rounded roof-tree beat
The petals of the rose.
The grasses sigh above your house;
Through drifts of darkest azure sweep
The sun-motes where the mosses drowse
That soothe your noonday sleep.

But when to ashes in the west
Those sun-fires die; and, silver, slim,
Eve, with the moon upon her breast,
Smiles on the uplands dim;
Then, all your wreathèd house astir,
Horns reared, grim mouth, deliberate pace,
You glide in silken silence where
The feast awaits your grace.
Strange partners, Snail! Then I, abed,
Consign the thick-darked vault to you,
Nor heed what sweetness night may shed
Nor moonshine's slumbrous dew.

SPEECH

The robin's whistled stave
Is tart as half-ripened fruit;
Wood-sooth from bower of leaves
The blackbird's flute;
Shrill-small the ardent wren's;
And the thrush, and the long-tailed tit—
Each hath its own apt tongue,
  Shrill, harsh, or sweet.

The meanings they may bear
Is long past ours to guess—
What sighs the wind, of the past,
In the wilderness?
Man also in ancient words
His thoughts may pack,
But if he not sing them too,
  Music they lack.

Oh, never on earth was bird,
Though perched on Arabian tree,
Nor instrument echoing heaven
Made melody strange as he;
Since even his happiest speech
Cries of his whither and whence,
And in mere sound secretes
  His inmost sense.

A ROBIN

Ghost-grey the fall of night,
  Ice-bound the lane,
Lone in the dying light
  Flits he again;
Lurking where shadows steal,
Perched in his coat of blood,
Man's homestead at his heel,
  Death-still the wood.

Odd restless child; it's dark;
All wings are flown
But this one wizard's—hark!—
Stone clapped on stone!
Changeling and solitary,
Secret and sharp and small,
Flits he from tree to tree,
Calling on all.

SNOWING

Snowing; snowing;
Oh, between earth and sky
A wintry wind is blowing,
Scattering with its sigh
Petals from trees of silver that shine
Like invisible glass, when the moon
In the void of night on high
Paces her orchards divine.

Snowing; snowing;
Ah me, how still, and how fair
The air with flakes interflowing,
The fields crystal and bare,
When the brawling brooks are dumb
And the parched trees matted with frost,
And the birds in this wilderness stare
Dazzled and numb!

Snowing . . . snowing . . . snowing:
Moments of time through space
Into hours, centuries growing,
Till the world's marred lovely face,
Wearied of change and chance,
Radiant in innocence dream—
Lulled by an infinite grace
To rest in eternal trance.

MEMORY

When summer heat has drowsed the day
With blaze of noontide overhead,
And hidden greenfinch can but say
What but a moment since it said;
When harvest fields stand thick with wheat,
And wasp and bee slave—dawn till dark—
Nor home, till evening moonbeams beat,
Silvering the nightjar's oaken bark:
How strangely then the mind may build
A magic world of wintry cold,
Its meadows with frail frost-flowers filled—
Bright-ribbed with ice, a frozen wold! . . .

When dusk shuts in the shortest day,
And huge Orion spans the night;
Where antlered fireflames leap and play
Chequering the walls with fitful light—
Even sweeter in mind the summer's rose
May bloom again; her drifting swan
Resume her beauty; while rapture flows
Of birds long since to silence gone:
Beyond the Nowel, sharp and shrill,
Of Waits from out the snowbound street,
Drums to their fiddle beneath the hill
June's mill wheel where the waters meet . . .

O angel Memory that can
Double the joys of faithless Man!

A BALLAD OF CHRISTMAS

It was about the deep of night,
And still was earth and sky,
When in the moonlight, dazzling bright,
Three ghosts came riding by.

Beyond the sea—beyond the sea,
  Lie kingdoms for them all:
I wot their steeds trod wearily—
  The journey is not small.

By rock and desert, sand and stream,
  They footsore late did go:
Now, like a sweet and blessed dream,
  Their path was deep with snow.

Shining like hoarfrost, rode they on,
  Three ghosts in earth's array:
It was about the hour when wan
  Night turns at hint of day.

Oh, but their hearts with woe distraught
  Hailed not the wane of night,
Only for Jesu still they sought
  To wash them clean and white.

For bloody was each hand, and dark
  With death each orbless eye;—
It was three Traitors mute and stark
  Came riding silent by.

Silver their raiment and their spurs,
  And silver-shod their feet,
And silver-pale each face that stared
  Into the moonlight sweet.

And he upon the left that rode
  Was Pilate, Prince of Rome,
Whose journey once lay far abroad,
  And now was nearing home.

And he upon the right that rode,
  Herod of Salem sate,
Whose mantle dipped in children's blood
  Shone clear as Heaven's gate.

And he, these twain betwixt, that rode
Was clad as white as wool,
Dyed in the Mercy of his God,
White was he crown to sole.

Throned mid a myriad Saints in bliss
Rise shall the Babe of Heaven
To shine on these three ghosts, i-wis,
Smit through with sorrows seven;

Babe of the Blessed Trinity
Shall smile their steeds to see:
Herod and Pilate riding by,
And Judas, one of three.

AN ABANDONED CHURCH

Roofless and eyeless, weed-sodden, dank, old, cold—
Fickly the sunset glimmered through the rain,
Gilded the gravestones—faded out again;
A storm-cock shrilled its aeon-old refrain,
Lambs bleated from their fold.

A ROSE IN WATER

A rose, in water, to its stem
Decoys a myriad beads of air;
And, lovely with the light on them,
Gives even its thorns their share.

MARTINS: SEPTEMBER

At secret daybreak they had met—
Chill mist beneath the welling light
Screening the marshes green and wet—
An ardent legion wild for flight.

Each preened and sleeked an arrowlike wing;
  Their eager throats with lapsing cries
Praising whatever fate might bring—
  Cold wave, or Africa's paradise.

Unventured, trackless leagues of air;
  England's sweet summer narrowing on;
Her lovely pastures: nought their care—
  Only this ardour to be gone.

A tiny, elfin, ecstatic host . . .
  And 'neath them, on the highway's crust,
Like some small mute belated ghost,
  A sparrow pecking in the dust.

SUNRISE

Bliss it is at break of day
To watch the night-mists thin away:
Like wraiths, of light distilled, they seem—
Phantoms of beauty from a forgotten dream.

As if to a new world new-bidden,
The risen sun shines through the gates of heaven;
And, since the meagrest face with joy may shine,
His glory greets the candle-flame in mine.

TWICE LOVELY

Chalk-white, light dazzled on the stone,
And there a weed, a finger high,
Bowed its silvery head with every
Breath of wind that faltered by.

Twice lovely thing! For when there drifted
A cloud across the radiant sun,
Not only that had it forsaken,
Its tiny shadow too was gone.

THE DAISY

Oh, saw I there—
Under bleak shadow of a towering wall,
From its great height let fall,
Dense-historied, and, echoing from its stone,
Ruinous, mossed, and lone,
The crying fowls of the air—
Set in a smooth, cool flood of agelong green,
Reared up on inch-high stalk, to see, be seen,
A pygmy daisy, with a silver face,
Shining in that dark place.

THE CHERRY TREES

Under pure skies of April blue I stood,
Where, in wild beauty, cherries were in blow;
And, as sweet fancy willed, see there I could
Boughs thick with blossom, or inch-deep in snow.

THE WINDOW

Sunlit, the lashes fringe the half-closed eyes
With hues no bow excels that spans the skies;
As magical the meteor's flight o'erhead,
And daybreak shimmering on a spider's thread . . .
Thou starry Universe—whose breadth, depth, height
Contracts to such strait entry as mere sight!

A QUEEN WASP

Why rouse from thy long winter sleep?
And sound that witchcraft drone in air?
The frost-bound hours of darkness creep,
    The night is cold, and bare

Of all that gave thee power to rear
Thy myriad Amazonian host.

All, all are dust. I only, here;
And thou—untimely ghost!—

Prowling, black-orbed, disconsolate,
Questing antennae, quivering wing,
Unwitting of the mortal fate
A human thought might bring

To the mute marvels in thy womb,
Tarrying only summer's heat
To breed a Babylon from the tomb—
As wondrous and exquisite!

Still, now. Thou'rt safe and hidden again;
Thy sombre, astonished piping done . . .
And I, with the hosts that flock the brain,
Back to my self am gone.

ROOKS IN OCTOBER

They sweep up, crying, riding the wind,
Ashen on blue outspread—
Gilt-lustred wing, sharp light-glazed beak,
And low flat ravenous head.

Claws dangling, down they softly swoop
Out of the eastern sun
Into the yellowing green-leaved boughs—
Their morning feast begun.

Clasping a twig that even a linnet
Might bend in song, they clip
Pat from the stalked embossed green cup
Its fruitage bitter-ripe.

Oh, what divine far hours their beauty
Of old for me beguiled,
When—acorn, oak, untarnished heavens—
I watched them as a child!

SNOW

This meal-white snow—
Oh, look at the bright fields!
What crystal manna
Death-cold winter yields!

Falling from heavens
Earth knows little of,
Yet mantling it
As with a flawless love—

A shining cloak—
It to the naked gives,
Wooing all sorrow
From the soul it shrives.

Adam no calmer vales
Than these descried;
Leda a shadow were
This white beside.

Water stays still for wonder;
Herb and flower,
Else starved with cold,
In warmth and darkness cower.

Miracle, far and near,
That starry flake
Can of its myriads
Such wide pastures make,

For sun to colour,
And for moon to wan,
And day's vast vault of blue
To arch upon!

A marvel of light,
Whose verge of radiance seems
Frontier of paradise,
The bourne of dreams.

O tranquil, silent, cold—
Such loveliness to see:
The heart sighs answer,
Benedicite!

AGE

This ugly old crone—
Every beauty she had
When a maid, when a maid.
Her beautiful eyes,
Too youthful, too wise
Seemed ever to come
To so lightless a home,
Cold and dull as a stone.
And her cheeks—who would guess
Cheeks cadaverous as this
Once with colours were gay
As the flower on its spray?
And who would believe
Life could bring one to grieve
So much as to make
Lips bent for love's sake
So thin and so grey?

O Youth, come away!
All she asks is her lone,
This old, desolate crone.
She needs us no more;
She is too old to care
For the charms that of yore
Made her body so fair.
Past repining, past care,
She lives but to bear
One or two fleeting years
Earth's indifference. Her tears
Have lost now their heat.

Her hands and her feet
Now shake but to be
Shed as leaves from a tree,
And her poor heart beats on
Like a sea—the storm gone.

IN THE DOCK

Pallid, mis-shapen he stands. The World's grimed thumb,
Now hooked securely in his matted hair,
Has haled him struggling from his poisonous slum
And flung him, mute as fish, close-netted there.

His bloodless hands entalon that iron rail.
He gloats in beastlike trance. His settling eyes
From staring face to face rove on—and quail.
Justice for carrion pants; and these the flies.

Voice after voice in smooth impartial drone
Erects horrific in his darkening brain
A timber framework, where agape, alone
Bright life will kiss good-bye the cheek of Cain.

Sudden like wolf he cries; and sweats to see
When howls man's soul, it howls inaudibly.

THE WRECK

Storm and unconscionable winds once cast
On grinding shingle, masking gap-toothed rock,
This ancient hulk. Rent hull, and broken mast,
She sprawls sand-mounded, of sea birds the mock.
Her sailors, drowned, forgotten, rot in mould,
Or hang in stagnant quiet of the deep—
The brave, the afraid into one silence sold;
Their end a memory fainter than of sleep.

She held good merchandise. She paced in pride
The uncharted paths men trace in ocean's foam.
Now laps the ripple in her broken side,
And zephyr in tamarisk softly whispers, Home.

The dreamer scans her in the sea-blue air,
And, sipping of contrast, finds the day more fair.

THE SUICIDE

Did these night-hung houses,
Of quiet, starlit stone,
Breathe not a whisper—'Stay,
Thou unhappy one;
Whither so secret away?'

Sighed not the unfriending wind,
Chill with nocturnal dew,
'Pause, pause, in thy haste,
O thou distraught! I too
Tryst with the Atlantic waste.'

Steep fell the drowsy street;
In slumber the world was blind:
Breathed not one midnight flower
Peace in thy broken mind?—
'Brief, yet sweet, is life's hour.'

Syllabled thy last tide—
By as dark moon stirred,
And doomed to forlorn unrest—
Not one compassionate word? . . .
'Cold is this breast.'

DRUGGED

Inert in his chair,
In a candle's guttering glow;
His bottle empty,
His fire sunk low;
With drug-sealed lids shut fast,
Unsated mouth ajar,
This darkened phantasm walks
Where nightmares are:

In a frenzy of life and light,
Crisscross—a menacing throng—
They gibe, they squeal at the stranger,
Jostling along,
Their faces cadaverous grey:
While on high from an attic stare
Horrors, in beauty apparelled,
Down the dark air.

A stream gurgles over its stones,
The chambers within are a-fire.
Stumble his shadowy feet
Through shine, through mire;
And the flames leap higher.
In vain yelps the wainscot mouse;
In vain beats the hour;
Vacant, his body must drowse
Until daybreak flower—

Staining these walls with its rose,
And the draughts of the morning shall stir
Cold on cold brow, cold hands.
And the wanderer
Back to flesh house must return.
Lone soul—in horror to see,
Than dream more meagre and awful,
Reality.

HOSPITAL

Welcome! Enter! This is the Inn at the Cross Roads,
Sign of the *Rising Sun*, of the *World's End*:
Ay, O Wanderer, footsore, weary, forsaken,
    Knock, and we will open unto thee—Friend.

Gloomy our stairs of stone, obscure the portal;
Burdened the air with a breath from the further shore;
Yet in our courtyard plays an invisible fountain,
    Ever flowers unfading nod at the door.

Ours is much company, and yet none is lonely;
Some with a smile may pay and some with a sigh;
So all be healed, restored, contented—it is no matter;
    So all be happy at heart to bid good-bye.

But know, our clocks are the world's; Night's wings are leaden;
Pain languidly sports with the hours: have courage, sir!
We wake but to bring thee slumber, our drowsy syrups
    Sleep beyond dreams on the weary will confer.

Ghosts may be ours; but gaze thou not too closely
If haply in chill of the dark thou rouse to see
One silent of foot, hooded, and hollow of visage,
    Pause, with secret eyes, to peer out at thee.

He is the Ancient Tapster of this Hostel,
To him at length even we all keys must resign;
And if he beckon, Stranger, thou too must follow—
    Love and all peace be thine.

THE QUIET ENEMY

Hearken!—now the hermit bee
Drones a quiet threnody;
Greening on the stagnant pool
The criss-cross light slants silken-cool;
In the venomed yew tree wings
Preen and flit. The linnet sings.

Gradually the brave sun
Droops to a day's journey done;
In the marshy flats abide
Mists to muffle midnight-tide.
Puffed within the belfry tower
Hungry owls drowse out their hour. . . .

Walk in beauty. Vaunt thy rose.
Flaunt thy transient loveliness.
Pace for pace with thee there goes
A shape that hath not come to bless.
I thine enemy? . . . Nay, nay.
I can only watch and wait
Patient treacherous time away,
Hold ajar the wicket gate.

IN THE GARDEN

A mild parochial talk was ours;
The air of afternoon was sweet
With burthen of the sun-parched flowers;
His fiery beams in fury beat
From out the O of space, and made,
Wherever leaves his glare let through,
Circlets of brilliance in the shade
Of his unfathomable blue.

Old Dr. Salmon sat pensive and grey,
And Archie's tongue was never still,
While dear Miss Arbuthnot fanned away
The stress of walking up the hill.
And little Bertha?—how bony a cheek!
How ghast an eye! Poor mite. . . . That pause—
When not even tactful tongues could speak! . . .
The drowsy Cat pushed out her claws.

A bland, unvexing talk was ours—
Sharing that gentle gilded cage—
Manners and morals its two brief hours
Proffered alike to youth and age.
Why break so pleasing a truce?—forefend!
Why on such sweetness and light intrude?
Why bid the child, 'Cough, "*Ah!*"'—and end
Our complaisance; her solitude?

PEEPING TOM

I was there—by the curtains
When some men brought a box:
And one at the house of
  Miss Emily knocks:

A low *rat-tat-tat*.
The door opened—and then,
Slowly mounting the steps, stooped
  In the strange men.

Then the door darkly shut,
And I saw their legs pass,
Like an insect's, Miss Emily's
  Window-glass—

Though why all her blinds
Have been hanging so low
These dumb foggy days,
  I don't know.

Yes, only last week
I watched her for hours,
Potting out for the winter her
  Balcony flowers.

And this very Sunday
She mused there a space,
Gazing into the street, with
  The vacantest face:

Then turned her long nose
And looked up at the skies—
One you would not have thought
  Weather-wise!

Yet . . . well, out stepped the men—
One ferrety-fair—
With gentlemen's hats, and
  Whiskers and hair;

And paused in the porch.
Then smooth, solemn, grey,
They climbed to their places,
  And all drove away

In their square varnished carriage,
The horse full of pride,
With a tail like a charger's:
  They all sate outside.

Then the road became quiet:
Her house stiff and staid—
Like a Stage—while you wait
  For the Harlequinade . . .

But what can Miss Emily
Want with a box
So long, narrow, shallow,
  And without any locks?

'Oh! Raining! Look!' she whispered—
Gazing out
On wheat-fields parched with drought,
And trees that yet in prime
Even of summertime
Showed yellow in their green;
But now, as with delight,
Showered down their withered leaves
Among the untimely sheaves
Of harvest, poor and lean:
'And I, alas!'
She sighed,
'This day to be a bride!'

Fair shone the sick man's moon
Upon his bed,
And her cold silver shed.
Glazed eyes, in wasted face,
He marked her solemn pace,
As on, from height to height,
She to her zenith won,
And the wide fields below
Made lovely—as with snow—
Transfiguring the night.
'Thou courtesan!'
Mocked he,
'Would'st thou, then, lie with *me*!'

Loud sounded out the Trump:
In vestry chill.
Its every stone athrill,
The parson leaned an ear,
With pouted lip, to hear.
But now a silence wells,
As of a sea at rest,
Stilling the honeyed air—

With fruit and flowers made fair—
As mute as his own bells.
He frowned. He sighed.
'To come
Just now!—at Harvest Home!'

ON THE ESPLANADE

The autumnal gales had wreaked their will;
Now lipped the wave its idle stones;
And winter light lay grey and chill;
Snow-capped the town's one distant hill,
Snow-cloaked its churchyard bones.

Sole farers on the esplanade,
A mother with her daughter walked.
Across a sea of pallid jade
The air thin fretful music made
And whimpered while they talked:—

'It's not the *present* that I dread,
No vulgar talk of chances lost.
Your heart seems stranger to your head,
And time wears on,' the elder said;
'My only fear, the cost.

'Sheer habit numbs the mind, my dear;
And lips by lover never kissed
Taste only at last the bitter cheer
Repining memory brings near
Of sweetness they have missed.

'You frown. Ah, yes! But why forget
I too was once in youth astray?
If ghosts at noonday could be met
And suns have heat that long have set—
Well, well, I have had my day.

'And now for you alone I live.
Think not I speak to pry, or vex;
Mere cold advice not mine to give;
Be truth and love between us, if
We share one heart, one sex!'

Awhile these two in silence paced,
Vacant the windows shoreward set.
Thin-screened with cloud the west they faced,
No glint of sun their shadows traced
On the flat flags; and yet

A burning, proud, defiant flare
Gleamed in the younger's eyes, as she
'Neath louring brows, as cold as fair,
Gazed straightly through the wintry air
Over the restless sea.

'Yes, Mother, all you say is true.'
She shrugged her slender shoulders. 'I—
Well, nothing I can say, or do
Has any meaning through and through;
What use to question, why?

'Infatuated bees may spend
Their silly lives of droning trance
In gathering nectar without end,
For other busy bees to blend,
And die in like mischance—

'The old, old tale. You say we share
One sex. It's that has gone askew.
The butterflies still dance on air
Without an instant's thought or care
And "sip the morning dew";

'As for the rest, they ape the Man,
And sacrifice their shapes and skin;

In freedom's blaze their faces tan;
Utopian revolutions plan;
Bemoan the Might-have-been.

'Not I. I loathe them both. I know
My very instincts are at war—
Another kind of neuter. So,
Whatever now may come or go,
There's nothing I deplore.

'Pity I laugh at. Flatterer
Flatters not twice the self-same way!
And when at last I come to where
Mere growing old brings solace—there!
I shall have had my day.

'A day as deadly black as night
For fatuous dream of a strange fate—
That long, long since has taken flight—
A lover not of sense or sight:
For him I used to wait.

'I ask you, Mother, how could a mind
Farced up with all I have learned and read—
The lies that curious fools have spread—
A vestige of him hope to find?
Enough of that!' she said.

Turned then the twain about to see
An East as rayless, grey, and bland,
Stretching into infinity,
And vacant windows glassily
Edging the pebbled strand;

While, poised in air, a bird of snow
Faltered on lifted wing—to glide
And glance at this strange to-and-fro,
That greying hair, that cheek's young glow—
And shrill, sad challenge cried.

THE FAT WOMAN

Massed in her creaseless black,
She sits; vast and serene;
Light—on glossed hair, large knees,
Huge bust—a-sheen.

A smile lurks deep in her eyes,
Thick-lidded, motionless, pale,
Taunting a world grown old,
Faded, and stale.

Enormous those childless breasts:
God in His pity knows
Why, in her bodice stuck,
Reeks a mock rose.

THE FECKLESS DINNER-PARTY

'Who are we waiting for?' '*Soup* burnt?' . . . Eight—
'Only the tinest party.—Us!'
'Darling! Divine!' 'Ten minutes late—'
'And my digest—' 'I'm *rav*enous!'

' "Toomes"?'—'Oh, he's new.' 'Looks crazed, I guess.'
' "Married"—*Again*!' 'Well; more or less!'

'Dinner is *served*!' ' "Dinner is served"!'
'Is served?' 'Is served.' 'Ah, yes.'

'Dear Mr. Prout, will you take down
The Lilith in leaf-green by the fire?
Blanche Ogleton? . . .' 'How coy a frown!—
Hasn't she borrowed *Eve's* attire?'
'Morose Old Adam!' 'Charmed—I vow.'
'Come then, and meet her now.'

'Now, Dr. Mallus—would you please?—
Our daring poetess, Delia Seek?'
'The lady with the bony knees?'

'And—*entre nous*—less song than beak.'
'Sharing her past with Simple Si—'
'*Bare* facts! He'll blush!' 'Oh, fie!'

'And *you*, Sir Nathan—false but fair!—
That fountain of wit, Aurora Pert.'
'More wit than It, poor dear! But there . . .'
'Pitiless Pacha! *And* such a flirt!'
' "Flirt"! *Me?*' 'Who else?' 'You here. . . . Who can . . .?'
'In*corr*igible man!'

'And now, Mr. Simon—little me!—
Last and—' 'By no means least!' 'Oh, come!
What naughty, naughty flattery!
Honey!—I *hear* the creature hum!'
'Sweets for the sweet, *I* always say!'
' "Always"? . . . We're last.' '*This* way?' . . .

'No, sir; straight on, please.' 'I'd have vowed!—
I came the other . . .' 'It's queer; I'm sure . . .'
'What frightful pictures!' 'Fiends!' 'The *crowd!*'
'Such nudes!' 'I can't endure . . .'

'Yes, *there* they go.' 'Heavens! *Are* we right?'
'Follow up closer!' ' "Prout"?—sand-blind!'
'This endless . . .' 'Who's turned down the light?'
'Keep calm! They're close behind.'

'Oh! Dr. Mallus; what dismal stairs!'
'I hate these old Victor . . .' 'Dry rot!'
'Darker and darker!' 'Fog!' 'The air's . . .'
'Scarce breathable!' 'Hell!' '*What?*'

'The banister's gone!' 'It's deep; keep close!'
'We're going down and down!' 'What fun!'
'Damp! Why, my shoes . . .' 'It's slimy . . . Not *moss!*'
'I'm freezing cold!' 'Let's run.'

'. . . Behind us. I'm giddy. . . .' 'The catacombs . . .'
'That shout!' 'Who's there?' 'I'm *alone*!' 'Stand back!'

'She said, Lead . . .' 'Oh!' 'Where's Toomes?' '*Toomes!*'
'TOOMES!'
'Stifling!' 'My skull will crack!'

'Sir Nathan! *Ai!*' 'I *say! Toomes!* Prout!'
'Where? Where?' '"Our silks and fine array" . . .'
'She's mad.' 'I'm dying!' 'Oh, Let me *out!*'
'My God! We've lost our way!' . . .

And now how sad-serene the abandoned house,
Whereon at dawn the spring-tide sunbeams beat;
And time's slow pace alone is ominous,
And naught but shadows of noonday therein meet;
Domestic microcosm, only a Trump could rouse:
And, pondering darkly, in the silent rooms,
He who misled them all—the butler, Toomes.

THE SLUM CHILD

No flower grew where I was bred,
No leafy tree
Its canopy of greenness spread
Over my youthful head.

My woodland walk was gutter stone.
Nowhere for me
Was given a place where I alone
Could to myself be gone.

In leafless Summer's stench and noise
I'd sit and play
With other as lean-faced girls and boys,
And sticks and stones for toys—

Homeless, till evening dark came down;
And street lamp's ray
On weary skulking beggary thrown
Flared in the night-hung town.

Then up the noisome stairs I'd creep
For food and rest,
Or, empty-bellied, lie, and weep
My wordless woes to sleep:

And wept in silence—shaken with fear—
But cautious lest
Those on the mattress huddled near
Should, cursing, wake and hear. . . .

O wondrous Life! though plainly I see,
Thus looking back,
What evil, and filth, and poverty,
In childhood harboured me,

And marvel that merciless man could so
The innocent wrack;
Yet, in bare truth, I also know
A well-spring of peace did flow,

Secretly blossomed, along that street;
And—foul-mouthed waif—
Though I in no wise heeded it
In the refuse at my feet,

Yet, caged within those spectral bones,
Aloof and safe,
Some hidden one made mock of groans,
Found living bread in stones.

O mystery of mysteries!
Between my hands I take that face,
Bloodless and bleak, unchildlike wise—
Epitome of man's disgrace—

I search its restless eyes,
And, from those woe-flecked depths, at me
Looks back through all its misery
A self beyond surmise.

THE BOTTLE

Of green and hexagonal glass,
With sharp, fluted sides—
Vaguely transparent these walls,
Wherein motionless hides
A simple so potent it can
To oblivion lull
The weary, the racked, the bereaved,
The miserable.

Flowers in silent desire
Their life-breath exhale—
Self-heal, hellebore, aconite,
Chamomile, dwale:
Sharing the same gentle heavens,
The sun's heat and light,
And, in the dust at their roots,
The same shallow night.

Each its own livelihood hath,
Shape, pattern, hue;
Age on to age unto these
Keeping steadfastly true;
And, musing amid them, there moves
A stranger, named Man,
Who of their ichor distils
What virtue he can;

Plucks them ere seed-time to blazon
His house with their radiant dyes;
Prisons their attar in wax;
Candies their petals; denies
Them freedom to breed in their wont;
Buds, fecundates, grafts them at will;
And with cunningest leechcraft compels
Their good to his ill.

Intrigue fantastic as this
    Where shall we find?
Mute in their beauty they serve him,
    Body and mind.
And one—but a weed in his wheat—
Is the poppy—frail, pallid, whose juice
With its saplike and opiate fume
    Strange dreams will induce

Of wonder and horror. And none
    Can silence the soul,
Wearied of self and of life,
    Earth's darkness and dole,
More secretly, deeply . . . But finally?—
    Waste not thy breath;
The words that are scrawled on this phial
    Have for synonym, *death*—

Wicket out into the dark
    That swings but one way;
Infinite hush in an ocean of silence
    Aeons away—
Thou forsaken!—even thou!—
    The dread good-bye;
The abandoned, the thronged, the watched,
        the unshared—
    Awaiting me—I!

ADIEU

Had these eyes never seen you,
This heart kept its paces,
If this mind—flooded river—
Had glassed not your graces;
Though lone my cold pillow,
In peace I had slumbered,
Whose hours now of waking
By moments are numbered.

You came; ice-still, asp-like;
You glanced 'neath your lashes;
You smiled—and you sighed out
Life's flame into ashes.
No compassion you showed me,
Void breast, cheating laughter:
Now I swing to my tryst
From this night-clotted rafter.

Peep out with your eyes.
Pout your mouth. Tilt your nose.
'Gainst the stench and the flies
Cull a balm-sprig, a rose.
This tongue that is stilled—
Not a tremor! Oh, else,
The whole roof of heaven
Would cry, False!

IN DISGRACE

The fear-dulled eyes in the pallid face
Stared at the darkening window-pane;
Sullen, derided, in disgrace—
They watched night narrowing in again:
Far-away shoutings; a furtive wind
Which a keyhole had found; a star aloof;
A heart at war with a blunted mind;
And a spout dripping rain from the roof:—

Drip—drip . . . till the light is gone;
But a heart not so hard as a stone.

. . . 'I was thinking, Mother, of that poor old horse
They killed the other day;
Nannie *says* it was only a bag of bones,
But I hated it taken away.'
'Of course, sweet; but now the baker's man
Will soon have a nice new motor van.'

'Yes, Mother. But when on our walk a squirrel
Crept up to my thumb to be fed,
She shoo'd it away with her gloves—like this!
They ought to be shot, she said.'
'She may have been reading, darling, that
Squirrels are only a kind of *rat*.'

'Goldfinches, Mother, owls and mice,
Tom-tits and bunnies and jays—
Everything in my picture-books
Will soon be gone, she says.'
'You see, my precious, so many creatures,
Though exquisitely made,
Steal, or are dirty and dangerous,
Or else they are bad for Trade.'

'I wonder, Mother, if when poor Noah
Was alone in the rain and dark,
He can ever have thought what wicked things
Were round him in the Ark. . . .
And are all children—like the rest—
Like me, as Nannie says, a pest?

'I woke last night from a dreadful dream
Of a place—it was all of stone;
And dark. And the walls went up, and up—
And oh, I was lost: alone!
I was *terrified*, Mother, and tried to call;
But a gabble, like echoes, came back.
It will soon, I suppose, be bedtime again?
And I hate lying there awake.'

'You mustn't, angel.' She glanced at the window—
  Smiled at the questioning mite.
'There's nothing to fear.' A wild bird scritched.
  The sun's last beam of light
Gilded the Globe, reserved for Man,
  Preparing for the Night.

'DRY AUGUST BURNED'

Dry August burned. A harvest hare
Limp on the kitchen table lay,
Its fur blood-blubbered, eyes astare,
While a small child that stood near by
Wept out her heart to see it there.

Sharp came the *clop* of hoofs, the clang
Of dangling chain, voices that rang.
Out like a leveret she ran,
To feast her glistening bird-clear eyes
On a team of field artillery,
Gay, to manœuvres, thudding by.
Spur and gun and limber plate
Flashed in the sun. Alert, elate,
Noble horses, foam at lip,
Harness, stirrup, holster, whip,
She watched the sun-tanned soldiery,
Till dust-white hedge had hidden away—
Its din into a rumour thinned—
The laughing, jolting, wild array:
And then—the wonder and tumult gone—
Stood nibbling a green leaf, alone,
Her dark eyes, dreaming. . . . She turned, and ran,
Elf-like, in to the house again.
The hare had vanished. . . . 'Mother,' she said,
Her tear-stained cheek now flushed with red,
'Please, may I go and see it skinned?'

'OF A SON'

A garish room—oil-lamped; a stove's warm blaze;
Gilt chairs drawn up to candles, and green baize:
The doctor hastened in—a moment stayed,
Watching the cards upon the table played—
Club, and sharp diamond, and heart, and spade.
And—still elated—he exclaimed, '*Parbleu*,
A thousand pardons, friends, for keeping you;
I feared I'd never see the lady through.
A boy, too! *Magnifique* the fight she made!
Ah, well, she's happy now!' Said one, ' "She"?—who?'
'A woman called Landru.'

Gentle as flutter of dove's wing, the cards
Face downwards fell again; and fever-quick,
Topped by old Time and scythe, a small brass clock
In the brief hush of tongues resumed its tick.

ONE IN THE PUBLIC GALLERY

The Seraph scanned the murderer in the dock—
The motionless Judge, beneath the court-room clock,
The listening jury, warders, counsel, Clerk;
Ay, one and all who shared that deepening dark:
And then, as I shunned to see,
He turned his burning eyes and looked at me.

A HARE

Eyes that glass fear, though fear on furtive foot
Track thee, in slumber bound;
Ears that whist danger, though the wind sigh not,
Nor Echo list a sound;
Heart—oh, what hazard must thy wild life be,
With sapient Man for thy cold enemy!

Fleet Scatterbrains, thou hast thine hours of peace
  In pastures April-green,
Where the shrill skylark's raptures never cease,
And the clear dew englobes the white moon's beam.
All happiness God gave thee, albeit thy foe
Roves Eden, as did Satan, long ago.

NAPOLEON

'What is the world, O soldiers?
It is I:
I, this incessant snow,
This northern sky;
Soldiers, this solitude
Through which we go
Is I.'

ENGLAND

No lovelier hills than thine have laid
My tired thoughts to rest:
No peace of lovelier valleys made
Like peace within my breast.

Thine are the woods whereto my soul,
Out of the noontide beam,
Flees for a refuge green and cool
And tranquil as a dream.

Thy breaking seas like trumpets peal;
Thy clouds—how oft have I
Watched their bright towers of silence steal
Into infinity!

My heart within me faints to roam
In thought even far from thee:
Thine be the grave whereto I come,
And thine my darkness be.

TRUCE

Far inland here Death's pinions mocked the roar
Of English seas;
We sleep to wake no more,
Hushed, and at ease;
Till sound a trump, shore on to echoing shore,
Rouse from a peace, unwonted then to war,
Us and our enemies.

MOTLEY

Come, Death, I'd have a word with thee;
And thou, poor Innocency;
And love—a Lad with broken wing;
And Pity, too:
The Fool shall sing to you,
As Fools will sing.

Ay, music hath small sense,
And a tune's soon told,
And Earth is old,
And my poor wits are dense;
Yet have I secrets,—dark, my dear,
To breathe you all. Come near.
And lest some hideous listener tells,
I'll ring my bells.

They are all at war!—
Yes, yes, their bodies go
'Neath burning sun and icy star
To chaunted songs of woe,
Dragging cold cannon through a mire
Of rain and blood and spouting fire,
The new moon glinting hard on eyes
Wide with insanities!

Ssh! . . . I use words
I hardly know the meaning of;

And the mute birds
Are glancing at Love
From out their shade of leaf and flower,
Trembling at treacheries
Which even in noonday cower.
Heed, heed not what I said

Of frenzied hosts of men,
More fools than I,
On envy, hatred fed,
Who kill, and die—
Spake I not plainly, then?
Yet Pity whispered, 'Why?'

Thou silly thing, off to thy daisies go!
Mine was not news for child to know,
And Death—no ears hath. He hath supped where creep
Eyeless worms in hush of sleep;
Yet, when he smiles, the hand he draws
Athwart his grinning jaws—
Faintly the thin bones rattle, and—there, there!
Hearken how my bells in the air
Drive away care! . . .

Nay, but a dream I had
Of a world all mad.
Not simple happy mad like me,
Who am mad like an empty scene
Of water and willow tree,
Where the wind hath been;
But that foul Satan-mad,
Who rots in his own head,
And counts the dead,
Not honest one—and two—
But for the ghosts they were,
Brave, faithful, true,
When, head in air,
In Earth's clear green and blue
Heaven they did share

With beauty who bade them there. . . .

There, now! Death goes—
Mayhap I've wearied him.
Ay, and the light doth dim;
And asleep's the rose;
And tired Innocence
In dreams is hence. . . .
Come, Love, my lad,
Nodding that drowsy head,
'Tis time thy prayers were said!

THE MARIONETTES

Let the foul Scene proceed:
  There's laughter in the wings;
'Tis sawdust that they bleed,
  Only a box Death brings.

How rare a skill is theirs—
  These extreme pangs to show,
How real a frenzy wears
  Each feigner of woe!

Gigantic dins uprise!
  Even the gods must feel
A smarting of the eyes
  As these fumes upsweel.

Strange, such a Piece is free,
  While we Spectators sit,
Aghast at its agony,
  Yet absorbed in it!

Dark is the outer air,
  Coldly the night draughts blow,
Mutely we stare, and stare
  At the frenzied Show.

Yet heaven hath its quiet shroud
  Of deep, immutable blue—
We cry 'An end!' We are bowed
  By the dread, 'It's true!'

While the Shape who hoofs applause
  Behind our deafened ear,
Hoots—angel-wise—'the Cause!'
  And affrights even fear.

ALEXANDER

It was the Great Alexander,
  Capped with a golden helm,
Sate in the ages, in his floating ship,
    In a dead calm.

Voices of sea-maids singing
  Wandered across the deep:
The sailors labouring on their oars
    Rowed, as in sleep.

All the high pomp of Asia,
  Charmed by that siren lay,
Out of their weary and dreaming minds,
    Faded away.

Like a bold boy sate their Captain,
  His glamour withered and gone,
In the souls of his brooding mariners,
    While the song pined on.

Time, like a falling dew,
  Life, like the scene of a dream,
Laid between slumber and slumber,
    Only did seem. . . .

O Alexander, then,
  In all us mortals too,
Wax thou not bold—too bold
    On the wave dark-blue!

Come the calm, infinite night,
  Who then will hear
Aught save the singing
    Of the sea-maids clear?

GOOD COMPANY

The stranger from the noisy inn
Strode out into the quiet night,
Tired of the slow sea-faring men.

The wind blew fitfully in his face;
He smelt the salt, and tasted it,
In that sea-haunted, sandy place.

Dim ran the road down to the sea
Bowered in with trees, and solitary;
Ever the painted sign swang slow—
An Admiral staring moodily.

The stranger heard its silly groan;
The beer-mugs rattling to and fro;
The drawling gossip: and the glow
Streamed thro' the door on weed and stone.

Better this star-sown solitude,
The empty night-road to the sea,
Than company so dull and rude.

He smelt the nettles sour and lush,
About him went the bat's shrill cry,
Pale loomed the fragrant hawthorn-bush.

And all along the sunken road—
Green with its weeds, though sandy dry—

Bugloss, hemlock and succory—
The night-breeze wavered from the sea.
And soon upon the beach he stood.

A myriad pebbles in the faint
Horned radiance of a sinking moon
Shone like the rosary of a saint—
A myriad pebbles which, through time,
The bitter tides had visited,
Flood and ebb, by a far moon led,
Noon and night and morning-prime.

He stood and eyed the leaping sea,
The long grey billows surging on,
Baying in sullen unison
Their dirge of agelong mystery.

And, still morose, he went his way,
Over the mounded shingle strode,
And reached a shimmering sand that lay
Where transient bubbles of the froth
Like eyes upon the moonshine glowed,
Faint-coloured as the evening moth.

But not on these the stranger stared,
Nor on the stars that spanned the deep,
But on a body, flung at ease,
As if upon the shore asleep,
Hushed by the rocking seas.

Of a sudden the air was wild with cries—
Shrill and high and violent,
Fled fast a soot-black cormorant,
'Twixt ocean and the skies.

It seemed the sea was like a heart
That stormily a secret keeps
Of what it dare to none impart.
And all its waves rose, heaped and high—
And communed with the moon-grey sky.

The stranger eyed the sailor there,
Mute, and stark, and sinister—
His stiffening sea-clothes grey with salt;
His matted hair, his eyes ajar,
And glazed after the three-fold fear.

And ever the billows cried again
Over the rounded pebble stones,
Baying that heedless sailor-man.

He frowned and glanced up into the air—
Where star with star all faintly shone,
Cancer and the Scorpion,
In ancient symbol circling there:

Gazed inland over the vacant moor;
But ancient silence, and a wind
That whirls upon a sandy floor,
Were now its sole inhabitants.

Forthwith, he wheeled about—away
From the deep night's sad radiance;
The yells of gulls and cormorants
Rang shrilly in his mind.

Pursued by one who noiseless trod,
Whose sharp scythe whistled as he went,
O'er sand and shingle, tuft and sod,
Like hunted hare he coursing ran,
Nor stayed until he came again
Back to the old convivial inn—
The mugs, the smoke, the muffled din—
Packed with its slow-tongued sailor-men.

THE RAILWAY JUNCTION

From here through tunnelled gloom the track
Forks into two; and one of these
Wheels onward into darkening hills,
And one toward distant seas.

How still it is; the signal light
At set of sun shines palely green;
A thrush sings; other sound there's none,
Nor traveller to be seen—

Where late there was a throng. And now,
In peace awhile, I sit alone;
Though soon, at the appointed hour,
I shall myself be gone.

But not their way: the bow-legged groom,
The parson in black, the widow and son,
The sailor with his cage, the gaunt
Gamekeeper with his gun,

That fair one, too, discreetly veiled—
All, who so mutely came, and went,
Will reach those far nocturnal hills,
Or shores, ere night is spent.

I nothing know why thus we met—
Their thoughts, their longings, hopes, their fate:
And what shall I remember, except—
The evening growing late—

That here through tunnelled gloom the track
Forks into two; of these
One into darkening hills leads on,
And one toward distant seas?

ROSE

Three centuries now are gone
Since Thomas Campion
Left men his airs, his verse, his heedful prose.
Few other memories
Have we of him, or his,
And, of his sister, none, but that her name was Rose.

Woodruff, far moschatel
May the more fragrant smell
When into brittle dust their blossoming goes.
His, too, a garden sweet,
Where rarest beauties meet,
And, as a child, he shared them with this Rose.

Faded, past changing, now,
Cheek, mouth, and childish brow.
Where, too, her phantom wanders no man knows.
Yet, when in undertone
That eager lute pines on,
Pleading of things he loved, it sings of Rose.

THE ENCOUNTER

'Twixt dream and wake we wandered on,
Thinking of naught but you and me;
And lo, when day was nearly gone,
A wondrous sight did see.

There, in a bed of rushes, lay
A child all naked, golden and fair—
Young Eros dreaming time away,
With roses in his hair.

Tender sleep had o'ertaken him,
Quenched his bright arrows, loosed his bow,
And in divine oblivion dim
Had stilled him through and through.

Never have I such beauty seen
As burned in his young dreaming face,
Cheek, hair, and lip laid drowsily
In slumber's faint embrace.

Oh, how he started, how his eyes
Caught back their sudden shiningness
To see you stooping, loving-wise,
Him, slumbering, to caress!

How flamed his brow, what childish joy
Leapt in his heart at sight of thee,
When, 'Mother, mother!' cried the boy:
And—frowning—turned on me!

ENGLISH DOWNS

Here, long ere kings to battle rode
In thunder of the drum,
And trumps fee-faughed defiance,
And taut bow-strings whistled, 'Come!'—

This air breathed milky sweet
With nodding columbine,
Dangled upon the age-gnarled thorn
The clematis twine;

Meek harebell hung her head
Over the green-turfed chalk,
And the lambs with their dams forgathered
Where the shepherds talk.

'HOW SLEEP THE BRAVE'

Bitterly, England must thou grieve—
Though none of these poor men who died
But did within his soul believe
That death for thee was glorified.

Ever they watched it hovering near—
A mystery beyond thought to plumb—
And often, in loathing and in fear,
They heard cold danger whisper, Come!—

Heard, and obeyed. Oh, if thou weep
Such courage and honour, woe, despair;
Remember too that those who sleep
No more remorse can share.

DEFEAT

The way on high burned white beneath the sun,
Crag and gaunt pine stood stark in windless heat,
With sun-parched weeds its stones were over-run,
And he who had dared it, his long journey done,
Lay sunken in the slumber of defeat.

A raven low in the air, with stagnant eyes,
Poised in the instant of alighting gust,
Rent the thin silence with his hungry cries,
Voicing his greed o'er this far-scented prize,
Stiff in the invisible movement of the dust.

He lay, sharp-boned beneath his skin, half-nude,
His black hair tangled with a blackening red,
His gaze wide-staring in his solitude,
O'er which a bristling cloud of flies did brood,
In mumbling business with his heedless head.

Unfathomable drifts of space below,
Stretched, like grey glass, an infinite low sea,
Whereon a conflict of bright beams did flow,
In fiery splendour trembling to and fro—
The noon sun's angel-loosened archery.

And still on high, the way, a lean line, wound,
Wherefrom the raven had swooped down to eat,
To mortal eyes without an end, or bound,
Nor any creeping shadow to be found
To cool the sunken temples of defeat.

Defeat was scrawled upon each naked bone,
Defeat in the glazed vacancy of his eye,
Defeat his hand clutched in that waste of stone,
Defeat the bird yelped, and the flies' mazed drone
Lifted thanksgiving for defeat come by.

Lost in eternal rumination stare
Those darkened sockets of a dreamless head,

That cheek and jaw with the unpeopled air,
With smile immutable, unwearying, share
The subtle cogitations of the dead.

Yet, dwindling mark upon fate's viewless height,
For sign and token above the infinite sea,
'Neath the cold challenge of the all-circling night
Shall lie for witness in the Invisible's sight
The mockless victory that defeat may be.

PEACE

Night is o'er England, and the winds are still;
Jasmine and honeysuckle steep the air;
Softly the stars that are all Europe's fill
Her heaven-wide dark with radiancy fair;
That shadowed moon now waxing in the west
Stirs not a rumour in her tranquil seas;
Mysterious sleep has lulled her heart to rest,
Deep even as theirs beneath her churchyard trees.

Secure, serene; dumb now the night-hawk's threat;
The guns' low thunder drumming o'er the tide;
The anguish pulsing in her stricken side. . . .
All is at peace. . . . But, never, heart, forget:
For this her youngest, best, and bravest died,
These bright dews once were mixed with bloody sweat.

COURAGE

O heart, hold thee secure
In this blind hour of stress,
Live on, love on, endure,
Uncowed, though comfortless.

Life's still the wondrous thing
It seemed in bygone peace,
Though woe now jar the string,
And all its music cease.

Even if thine own self have
No haven for defence;
Stand not the unshaken brave
To give thee confidence?

Worse than all worst 'twould be,
If thou, who art thine all,
Shatter ev'n their reality
In thy poor fall!

GOLIATH

Still as a mountain with dark pines and sun
He stood between the armies, and his shout
Rolled from the empyrean above the host:
'Bid any little flea ye have come forth,
And wince at death upon my finger-nail!'
He turned his large-boned face; and all his steel
Tossed into beams the lustre of the noon;
And all the shaggy horror of his locks
Rustled like locusts in a field of corn.
The meagre pupil of his shameless eye
Moved like a cormorant over a glassy sea.
He stretched his limbs, and laughed into the air,
To feel the groaning sinews of his breast,
And the long gush of his swol'n arteries pause:
And, nodding, wheeled, towering in all his height.
Then, like a wind that hushes, he gazed and saw
Down, down, far down upon the untroubled green
A shepherd-boy that swung a little sling.

Goliath shut his lids to drive that mote
Which vexed the eastern azure of his eye,
Out of his vision; and stared down again.
Yet stood the youth there, ruddy in the flare
Of his vast shield, nor spake, nor quailed, gazed up,
As one might scan a mountain to be scaled.
Then, as it were, a voice unearthly still
Cried in the cavern of his bristling ear,
'His name is Death!' . . . And, like the flush
That dyes Sahara to its lifeless verge,
His brows' bright brass flamed into sudden crimson;
And his great spear leapt upward, lightning-like,

Shaking a dreadful thunder in the air;
Span betwixt earth and sky, bright as a berg
That hoards the sunlight in a myriad spires,
Crashed: and struck echo through an army's heart.

Then paused Goliath, and stared down again.
And fleet-foot Fear from rolling orbs perceived
Steadfast, unharmed, a stooping shepherd-boy
Frowning upon the target of his face.
And wrath tossed suddenly up once more his hand;
And a deep groan grieved all his strength in him.
He breathed; and, lost in dazzling darkness, prayed—
Besought his reins, his gloating gods, his youth:
And turned to smite what he no more could see.

Then sped the singing pebble-messenger,
The chosen of the Lord from Israel's brooks,
Fleet to its mark, and hollowed a light path
Down to the appalling Babel of his brain.
And, like the smoke of dreaming Soufrière,
Dust rose in cloud, spread wide, slow silted down
Softly all softly on his armour's blaze.

GLORIA MUNDI

Upon a bank, easeless with knobs of gold,
  Beneath a canopy of noonday smoke,
I saw a measureless Beast, morose and bold,
  With eyes like one from filthy dreams awoke,
Who stares upon the daylight in despair
For very terror of the nothing there.

This beast in one flat hand clutched vulture-wise
  A glittering image of itself in jet,
And with the other groped about its eyes
  To drive away the dreams that pestered it;
And never ceased its coils to toss and beat
The mire encumbering its feeble feet.

Sharp was its hunger, though continually
  It seemed a cud of stones to ruminate,
And often like a dog let glittering lie
  This meatless fare, its foolish gaze to sate;
Once more convulsively to stoop its jaw,
Or seize the morsel with an envious paw.

Indeed, it seemed a hidden enemy
  Must lurk within the clouds above that bank,
It strained so wildly its pale, stubborn eye,
  To pierce its own foul vapours dim and dank;
Till, wearied out, it raved in wrath and foam,
Daring that Nought Invisible to come.

Ay, and it seemed some strange delight to find
  In this unmeaning din, till, suddenly,
As if it heard a rumour on the wind,
  Or far away its freër children cry,
Lifting its face made-quiet, there it stayed,
Till died the echo its own rage had made.

That place alone was barren where it lay;
  Flowers bloomed beyond, utterly sweet and fair;
And even its own dull heart might think to stay
  In livelong thirst of a clear river there,
Flowing from unseen hills to unheard seas,
Through a still vale of yew and almond trees.

And then I spied in the lush green below
  Its tortured belly, One, like silver, pale,
With fingers closed upon a rope of straw,
  That bound the Beast, squat neck to hoary tail;
Lonely in all that verdure faint and deep,
He watched the monster as a shepherd sheep.

I marvelled at the power, strength, and rage
  Of this poor creature in such slavery bound;
Tettered with worms of fear; forlorn with age;
  Its blue wing-stumps stretched helpless on the ground;
While twilight faded into darkness deep,
And he who watched it piped its pangs asleep.

IDLENESS

I saw old Idleness, fat, with great cheeks
Puffed to the huge circumference of a sigh,
But past all tinge of apples long ago.
His boyish fingers twiddled up and down
The filthy remnant of a cup of physic
That thicked in odour all the while he stayed.
His eyes were sad as fishes that swim up
And stare upon an element not theirs
Through a thin skin of shrewish water, then
Turn on a languid fin, and dip down, down,
Into unplumbed, vast, oozy deeps of dream.
His stomach was his master, and proclaimed it;
And never were such meagre puppets made
The slaves of such a tyrant, as his thoughts
Of that obese epitome of ills.

Trussed up he sat, the mockery of himself;
And when upon the wan green of his eye
I marked the gathering lustre of a tear,
Thought I myself must weep, until I caught
A grey, smug smile of satisfaction smirch
His pallid features at his misery.
And laugh did I, to see the little snares
He had set for pests to vex him: his great feet
Prisoned in greater boots; so narrow a stool
To seat such elephantine parts as his;
Ay, and the book he read, a Hebrew Bible;
And, to incite a gross and backward wit,
An old, crabbed, wormed, Greek dictionary; and
A foxy Ovid bound in dappled calf.

Enter on to a prodigious headland, a little before noon, two men in alien dress, and between them a third, younger than they, blindfold, and in the raiment of a prince. They remove the bandage from his eyes, and seat themselves on the turf. His hands bound behind his back, the Prince stands between them, looking out to sea. Dazed for a moment by the sudden glare, he stays silent.

Prince. What place is this?
All's strange to me, and I
Had fallen at last accustomed to the dark.
Why, then, to this vast radiance bring me blindfold?
Hangman. Why, Prince, a happy surprise!
First coach-room; then,
A steady creeping upward; and now—this.
Once died—and lived—a corse named Lazarus:
Remember, then, to all men else than they
Who will not blab, you have been three days dead—
And, that far gone, even princes are soon forgot.
Lo, then, your resurrection!—take your fill.
Nor need we three have joy in it alone.
Legions of listeners surround us here,
Alert, though out of hearing and of sight.
Prince. Like many journeys, this is best being done.
My lungs ache with the ascent and the thin air.
After your souring 'coach-room' it smells sweet.
(*He turns away.*)
How wondrous a scene of universal calm,
These last days' troubles and distractions done!
Look, how that pretty harebell nods her head,
Whispering, *ay, ay*. How fresh the scent of thyme!
The knife-winged birds that haunt this sea-blue vault
Even in their droppings mock the eye with flowers
Whiter than snow.
Hangman. Yes, and as bleached have picked
This coney's bones that dared their empire here.
Prince. How dark a shadow in so little a head
Peers from its thin-walled skull.

Hangman. By Gis,
Not thyme but stark Eternity domes this perch;
And who needs hempseed when his ghost's gone home?
Courtier. When yours goes home, the bitterest weed earth fats
Would taste more savoury to the hawks of hell.
Hangman. Meanwhile, a civil tongue hang in your head!
You've bribed your coming hither; let it rest.
Prince. I pray you cut these ropes from off my wrists.
Here's neither need nor hour to challenge why
And by whose tyranny I have endured
Monstrous humiliations. That may wait.
But I am faint, and have no hope in flight.
In quiet we'll sit, and you shall then rehearse
What wrongs are yours a little thought may right.
We all are human, and the heavens be judge.
Hangman (as he picks up the skull of the rabbit from the turf).
'We all are human, and the heavens be judge'!—
A dainty saying, Prince, in either part;
Come noon, and ample proof is yours of both!
I've heard of hermits drowned so deep in silence
Their hairy ears dreamed voices in their brains.
I'd be a hermit too, if in my cell
A homelier music than this bleaching wind's
In these sharp-bladed grasses lulled me asleep.
It seemed an instant gone a halting voice
Sighed, *flight*—as if in envy of these mews
That scream defiance o'er our innocent heads.
Alackaday, the dirge they seem to sing!
Courtier. This is sole solitude. It utterly dwarfs
Not merely man's corporeal girth and stature,
But melts to naught the imaginings of his soul.
Hangman (mocking him). So empty this wide salt-tang'd vast of air
'Twould gobble up the cries of all the dying
As artlessly as God Man's sabbath prayers!
Raved here some fell she-Roc a shrill lament
Over her brood struck cold by heedless thunder,
The nearest listener would softly smile

Dreaming him lulled by sigh of passing zephyr!
(*To the Prince.*) So, sir, our talk has edged again to'rd you.
Prince. Ay, has it so? What would you?
Hangman. Our sole selves,
And a something motionless in a huddle of clothes,
Which soon air's birds, earth's ants will disinfect,
Leaving it naught more talkative than bones.
Prince. Murder is in your thoughts?
Hangman. Ah, sir, a boy
That lugs poor Puss close-bagged and stone-companioned
Off to her first—and only—watery bath
May have misgivings; but not so grown men.
Murder's no worse a thing when it's called Justice.
We promise you your remorse shall vex no ear
Unwonted to reproaches. Scan this height!
Courtier (*sotto voce*). It is a table open to the eye of heav'n:
And lo, beyond that girdle of huge egg-boulders,
Sun-shivering waters to the horizon's verge—
The Ocean Sea—self-lulled, like full-fed babe
That mumbles its mother's nipple in its dreams.
Hangman. You see, sir, though Fate may on Kings cry, 'Check!',
Princes she merely pushes off the board.
Ay, and one broken down there, upon those stones,
Frenzied with thirst and pain, need not despair!
The lapping comfort of the inning tide,
Though of a languid pace as tardy as time's,
Will, at its leisure, muffle all lamentings.
And what care lobsters if their supper talk?
Prince. You speak as if some devil in your brains
Had stolen their sanity.
Hangman (*smiling closely into his face*). There runs a silly saying in my mind,
Moaned by poor lovers cheated of desire,
Two's company; three's none!
Prince (*ironically*). So be it, my friend.
Adieu. I will turn back without delay!
Doubtless the paths by which you have led me blindfold
Some instinct of direction will recall.

Hangman. I'm told that cats have such a sense of home
They'll dog their would-be murderers twenty miles,
To miaow defiance.
Prince (facing him, eye to eye). Yes. And so would I!
Wait but till I am free from fleshly bonds!
Hangman (laughing hollowly). An assignation past the post of death!
So be it! tho' night grows cold to'rd crow of cock!
Courtier (to the hangman). Hold now your festering tongue awhile, and wait;
A few more minutes, and it's final noon.
(He cuts the ropes that bind the Prince's wrists. The Prince seats himself on the turf. The Courtier paces the edge of the cliff, pausing at times to peer into the abyss.)
Courtier. This three days gone—and now no hope can help me—
A last brief message from the King's been mine
To bring you, Prince. In vain, in vain I stayed,
Pining in misery it might harmless prove,
Since Fate the while held all things in the balance.
The waiting's over; and the balance down.
The wild resolve I neither loved nor shared
Has fallen to worse than nothing; and the foes
That hated you can now feed full on scorn.
Prince. Cut to the bone, friend; I am sick of snippets.
Hangman. Well said, cut softly to the very bone.
The minutes dwindle, and the tide has turned.
Courtier. I'll keep my Master's pace. . . . There was a realm,
A state, a hive, a human emmet heap,
Ruled over by a king whose sceptre of iron
He wielded wisely, and bade kiss or crush,
According to his kingdom's need and crisis.
Merciful he when mercy he knew well
Could virtue serve, his People, justice, peace;
But swift and pitiless when his anxious gaze
Pierced to the cancer of that People's ill.
Such rulers win more confidence than love.
None ever assailed his lealty to the good
That in his inmost soul he deemed the best—

Best for the most, less, least—since best for all.
Hangman. A pleasing purge—and kingly common sense.
Think now, had this bold rabbit, gone to dust,
Ruled o'er his warren—why, this bright green turf
Were now a rodents' Golgotha of bones.
He who brews poison should be first to taste it.
Prince. Of your twin voices one is wolfish bass,
But keeps the nearer to the tune they share.
Courtier. But little more of *that*, God knows—then none.
(*He continues almost as if he were talking to himself.*)
In hives of Bees, whose summer is all spent
Toiling and moiling against wintry want,
It's not the worker, or the fatted drone,
May breed disaster, but some royal she
Fed only on nectar in her nymphal cell,
And yet uniquely sensed, who issues out
Into the whispering business of the hive,
Intent on some pre-natal paradise,
To find it but a maze of servile instinct.
What wonder if in heat of youth she rove,
Plagued and impatient at a fate so pinched,
Lusting to free her kind, to entice them on—
On to some dreamed chimera of workless bliss!
Treason! she trumps to her contented kin.
'*Awake! Arouse! Fools, fools, your Queen is mad!*'
But skeps of straw are not of the weaving of heaven,
And Nature's neutral tyranny is such
She'll sate with sunshine, and then starve in ice.
This jade I tell of, ardent, selfless, rash,
May of truth's essence have sucked, but what of that?
One born too wise within a polity
As ancient as the Bee's is curse more dire
Than countless generations of the dull.
Hangman. All that this prating means is, Look at me!—
Crafty enough to feign I have few wits,
But yet can do with skill the things I'm bid.
And after, bloody-fingered, fist my wages.
Prince. So plain the gallows shows upon your face

You need no hangman tongue to draw the trap.
(*To the other.*) Of you I ask only a moment's peace
To be alone in commune with myself.
I weary of your parables and am dumb.
Were I led hither again, again, again,
And at this bleak abyss which now I face
My bowels in a frenzy of fear should melt—
Again, again; I would no word recant,
No act recall, nor one ideal betray
Which these last few vain hours have brought to naught.
Oh, I am weary, give me leave to die.
Words may worse torture wreak than screw or rack.

Hangman. And that's why we have given you words in plenty.

Courtier (*still ignoring him*). One other grief—to share; and *I* have done.

This She I spoke of was, in fact, a prince;
The hive, his father's realm: a prince held dear
Beyond idolatry; the wonder and hope
Of this wise monarch's soul. No Absalom—
Since thrones in time began—was more endued
With beauty, genius, grace, fame, fortune, zeal.
He'd but to turn his head to be beloved.
The dumb-tongued stones that paved his palace court
Echoed of glory when he trod; no bliss
Was past his full achievement. Yes, my lord,
Our royal master grudged you nothing; and
He bade me breathe you peace on this account;
Avow again—though you are past his pity—
That not one blotch of envy in his blood
Did ever incite him to a thought's revenge.
He loved you . . . So, 'tis done. And I am here
To bring his blessing ere your feet go on
Into the dark unknown. There this world's kings
May find them less in rank than scullions
In service of the gods; who yet decreed
That they reign faithfully and reign unmoved
By any hope too high for human practice.
To call men equal is a heresy;

And worse—denial of the divine. Think you,
Doth jealousy green the hyssop in the wall
That with the cedar shares her mote of sunlight?
Is pain the blesseder for being shared?
Is aught in life worth having but what the mind
Hath sealed its own within its secret silence?
What is heart's ease—ambition, or the peace
That only comes of loving its poor best? . . .
When death is in the pulpit—thus he speaks!
And I, alas, his deputy. But now
I cease. No more the mouthpiece of my Master,
I stay to keep you company to the end.

(*With a gesture the Hangman bids the Prince stand. He leads him to the brink of the abyss.*)

Prince. So wild a light, and then the little dark.
This is the end, then. And, to you, farewell.
What was between my father and his son
I gave you never warranty to share.
What was between my inmost self and me
Yours never the faintest insight to descry.
He gave me life—scant born in world half-dead.
And now he craves it of me, since his seed
Has fruited past his liking. Tell him this—
When you from your day's pleasuring have gone back:
I died remorseless, yet in shame—for one
So rich in magnanimity who yet
Refused his realm the very elixir of life;
And sick with terror of what the truth might tell,
Uncharged, untried, has chos'n me *this* for end.
I am gone forth on my high errand; he
Breathes on in infamy.

Hangman. Ha, ha, *ha, ha!* The pity that a roost
So fecund as this gives the young cock no hens!

Courtier. Great deeds great crimes may be; and so
Of their extravagance win doom at last,
Commensurate in scope, in kind, in awe,
With him whose blinded wisdom brought them forth.
Hence this immensity on which we stand.

Such was his edict.
Prince. And is *this* the sot
He of his own sole choice bade bring me here?
We two—though at this pass—are of a kin;
I loved you; love you yet, but—
Courtier. I know not, sir. The King's mouth now says nothing.
I came at no man's orders; only lest
This hangman here . . .
(*A triple fanfare of trumpets is heard echoing up from where beyond view of the headland the three legions of soldiery have been awaiting noon.*)
But hark, we're for a journey
Beyond the talisman of our wits to scan.
Hangman (*spitting upon the ground in contempt of both of them*).
'Ware, then! Lift princely eyes into the void
And watch as 'twere your soul's winged silver slide
Into the empyrean. Get you gone!
Prince (*leaping out into space*). Away!
Courtier. And I! . . . Away! . . .
(*A triple roll of drums reverberates in the parched air of noonday from out of the valley, ascends into the heavens, ceases.*)

THE OWL

'Well, God 'ild you! They say the owle was a baker's daughter'. *Hamlet*, IV, v.

The door-bell jangled in evening's peace,
Its clapper dulled with verdigris.
Lit by the hanging lamp's still flame
Into the shop a beggar came,
Glanced gravely around him—counter, stool,
Ticking clock and heaped-up tray
Of baker's dainties, put to cool;
And quietly turned his eyes away.

Stepped out the goodwife from within—
Her blandest smile from brow to chin
Fading at once to blank chagrin
As she paused to peer, with keen blue eyes

Sharpened to find a stranger there,
And one, she knew, no customer.
'We never give . . .' she said, and stayed;
Mute and intent, as if dismayed
At so profoundly still a face.
'What do you want?' She came a pace
Nearer, and scanned him, head to foot.
He looked at her, but answered not.

The tabby-cat that, fathom deep,
On the scoured counter lay asleep,
Reared up its head to yawn, and then,
Composing itself to sleep again,
With eyes by night made black as jet,
Gazed on the stranger. 'A crust,' he said.
  'A crust of bread.'
Disquiet in the woman stirred—
No plea, or plaint, or hinted threat—
So low his voice she had scarcely heard.
She shook her head; he turned to go.
'We've nothing here for beggars. And so . . .
If we gave food to all who come
They'd eat us out of house and home—
Where charity begins, they say;
And ends, as like as not—or may.'

Still listening, he answered not,
His eyes upon the speaker set,
Eyes that she tried in vain to evade
  But had not met.
She frowned. 'Well, that's my husband's rule;
But stay a moment. There's a stool—
Sit down and wait. Stale bread we've none.
And else . . .' she shrugged. 'Still, rest awhile,'
Her smooth face conjured up a smile,
'And I'll go see what can be done.'

He did as he was bidden. And she
Went briskly in, and shut the door;

To pause, in brief uncertainty,
Searching for what she failed to find.
Then tiptoed back to peer once more
In through the ribboned muslin blind,
And eyed him secretly, askance,
With a prolonged, keen, searching glance;
As if mere listening might divine
Some centuries-silent countersign. . .
Scores of lean hungry folk she had turned
Even hungrier from her door, though less
From stint and scorn than heedlessness.
Why then should she a scruple spare
For one who, in a like distress,
Had spoken as if in heart he yearned
Far more for peace than bread? But now
No mark of gloom obscured his brow,
No shadow of darkness or despair.
Still as an image of age-worn stone
That from a pinnacle looks down
Over the seas of time, he sat;
His stooping face illumined by
The burnished scales that hung awry
Beside the crusted loaves of bread.
Never it seemed shone lamp so still
  On one so sore bestead.
'Poor wretch,' she muttered, 'he minds me of. . .'
A footfall sounded from above;
And, hand on mouth, immovable,
She watched and pondered there until,
Stepping alertly down the stair,
Her daughter—young as she was fair—
Came within earshot.
                 'H'st,' she cried.
'A stranger here! And Lord betide,
He may have been watching till we're alone,
Biding his time, your father gone.
Come, now; come quietly and peep!—
Rags!—he would make a Christian weep!

I've promised nothing; but, good lack!
What shall I say when I go back?'

Her daughter softly stepped to peep.
'Pah! begging,' she whispered; 'I know that tale.
Money is all he wants—for ale!'
Through the cold glass there stole a beam
Of lamplight on her standing there,
Stilling her beauty as in a dream.
It smote to gold her wing-soft hair,
It scarleted her bird-bright cheek,
With shadow tinged her childlike neck,
Dreamed on her rounded bosom, and lay—
Like a sapphire pool at break of day,
Where martin and wagtail preen and play—
In the shallow shining of her eye.

'T't, mother,' she scoffed, with a scornful sigh,
And peeped again, and sneered—her lip
Drawn back from her small even teeth,
Showing the bright-red gums beneath.
'Look, now! The wretch has fallen asleep—
Stark at the counter, there; still as death.
As I sat alone at my looking-glass,
I heard a footstep—watched him pass,
Turn, and limp thief-like back again.
Out went my candle. I listened; and then
Those two faint *dings*. Aha! thought I,
Honest he may be, though old and blind,
But *that's* no customer come to buy.
So down I came—too late! I knew
He'd get less comfort from me than you!
I warrant, a pretty tale he told!
"Alone"! Lord love us! Leave him to me.
I'll teach him manners. Wait and see.'
She nodded her small snake-like head,
Sleeked with its strands of palest gold,
'Waste not, want not, say I,' she said.

Her mother faltered. Their glances met—
Furtive and questioning; hard and cold—
In mute communion mind with mind,
Though little to share could either find.
'Save us!' she answered, 'sharp eyes you have,
If in the dark you can see the blind!
He was as tongueless as the grave.
"Tale"! Not a sigh. Not one word said.
  Except that he asked for bread.'

Uneasy in her thoughts, she yet
Knew, howsoever late the hour,
And none in call, small risk they ran
From any homeless beggar-man.
While as for this—worn, wasted, wan—
  A nod, and he'd be gone.
Waste not, want not, forsooth! The chit—
To think that she should so dictate!

' "Asleep", you say? Well, what of that?
What mortal harm can come of it?
A look he gave me; and his eyes . . .
Leave him to me, Miss Worldly-wise!
Trouble him not. Stay here, while I
See how much broken meat's put by.
God knows the wretch may have his fill.
And you—keep watch upon the till!'

She hastened in, with muffled tread.
Meanwhile her daughter, left alone,
Waited, watching, till she was gone;
Then softly drew open the door, to stare
More nearly through the sombre air
At the still face, dark matted hair,
Scarred hand, shut eyes, and silent mouth,
Parched with the long day's bitter drouth;
Now aureoled in the lustre shed
From the murky lamp above his head.
Her tense young features distorted, she

Gazed on, in sharpening enmity,
Her eager lips tight shut, as if
The very air she breathed might be
Poisoned by this foul company.
That such should be allowed to live!
Yet, as she watched him, needle-clear,
  Beneath her contempt stirred fear.
Fear, not of body's harm, or aught
Instinct or cunning may have taught
Wits edged by watchful vanity:
It seemed her inmost soul made cry—
Wild thing, bewildered, the huntsmen nigh–
Of hidden ambush, and a flood
Of vague forebodings chilled her blood.
Kestrel keen, her eyes' bright blue
Narrowed, as she stole softly through.

'H'st, you!' she whispered him. 'Waken! Hear
I come to warn you. Danger's near!'
Cat-like she scanned him, drew-to the door,
'She is calling for help. No time to wait!—
Before the neighbours come—before
They hoick their dogs on, and it's too late!'
The stranger listened; turned; and smiled:
'But whither shall I go, my child?
All ways are treacherous to those
Who, seeking friends, find only foes.'

My child!—the words like poison ran
Through her quick mind. 'What!' she began,
In fuming rage; then stayed; for, lo,
This visage, for all its starven woe,
That now met calmly her scrutiny,
Of time's corruption was wholly free.
The eyes beneath the level brows,
Though weary for want of sleep, yet shone
With strange directness, gazing on.
In her brief life she had never seen
A face so eager yet serene,

And, in its deathless courage, none
To bear with it comparison.

'I will begone,' at length he said.
  'All that I asked was bread.'

Her anger died away; she sighed;
Pouted; then laughed. 'So Mother tried
To scare me? Told me I must stop
In there—some wretch was in the shop
Who'd come to rob and . . . Well, thought I,
Seeing's believing; I could but try
To keep *her* safe. What else to do—
Till help might come?' She paused, and drew
A straying lock of yellow hair
Back from her cheek—as palely fair—
In heedless indolence; as when
A wood-dove idly spreads her wing
Sunwards, and folds it in again.
Aimless, with fingers slender and cold,
She fondled the tress more stealthily
  Than miser with his gold.
And still her wonder grew: to see
A man of this rare courtesy
So sunken in want and poverty.
What was his actual errand here?
And whereto was he journeying?
A silence had fallen between them. Save
The weight-clock's ticking, slow and grave,
No whisper, in or out, she heard;
The cat slept on; and nothing stirred.
'Is it only hungry?' she cajoled,
In this strange quiet made more bold.
'Far worse than hunger seems to me
The cankering fear of growing old.
That is a kind of hunger too—
Which even *I* can share with you.
And, heaven help me, always alone!
Mother cares nothing for that. But wait;

See now how dark it is, and late;
Nor any roof for shelter. But soon
Night will be lovely—with the moon.
When all is quiet, and she abed,
Do you come back, and click the latch;
And I'll sit up above, and watch.
A supper then I'll bring,' she said,
'Sweeter by far than mouldy bread!'

Like water chiming in a well
Which uncropped weeds more sombre make,
The low seductive syllables fell
Of every word she spake—
Music lulling the listening ear,
Note as of nightbird, low and clear,
That yet keeps grief awake.
But still he made no sign. And she,
Now, fearing his silence, scoffed mockingly,
'God knows I'm not the one to give
For the mere asking. As I live
I loathe the cringing skulking scum,
Day in, day out, that begging come;
Sots, tramps, who pester, whine, and shirk—
They'd rather starve to death than work.
And lie!'—She aped, ' "God help me, m'm;
'Tisn't myself but them at home!
Crying for food they are. Yes, seven!—
And their poor mother safe in heaven!" '
Glib as a prating parrot she
Mimicked the words with sidling head,
Bright-red tongue and claw-like hands.
'But—I can tell you—when *I*'m there
There's little for the seven to share!'
She raised her eyebrows; innocent, mild—
Less parrot now than pensive child;
Her every movement of body and face,
As of a flower in the wind's embrace,
Born of a natural grace.

A vagrant moth on soundless plume,
Lured by the quiet flame within,
Fanned darkling through the narrow room,
Out of the night's obscurity.
She watched it vacantly.
'If we gave food to *all*, you see
We might as well a Workhouse be!
I've not much patience with beggary.
What use is it to whine and wail?—
Most things in this world are made for sale!
But one who really needs . . .' She sighed.
'I'd hate for him to be denied.'
She smoothed her lips, then smiled, to say:
'Have you yourself come far to-day?'
Like questing call, where shallows are
And sea-birds throng, rang out that *far*—
Decoy to every wanderer.

The stranger turned, and looked at her.
'Far, my child; and far must fare.
My only home is everywhere;
And that the homeless share;
The vile, the lost, in misery—
Where comfort cannot be.
You are young, your life's your own to spend;
May it escape as dark an end.'

Her fickle heart fell cold, her eyes
Stirred not a hair's breadth, serpent-wise.
'You say', she bridled, 'that to me!
Meaning you'd have their company
Rather than mine? Why, when a friend
Gives for the giving, there's an end
To that dull talk! *My child!*—can't you
See who you are talking to?
Do you suppose because I stop
Caged up in this dull village shop
With none but clods and numskulls near,
Whose only thought is pig and beer,

And sour old maids that pry and leer,
I am content? Me! Never pine
For what by every right is mine?
Had I a wild-sick bird to keep,
Is this where she should mope and cheep?
Aching, starving, for love and light,
Eating her heart out, dawn to night!
Oh, yes, they say that safety's sweet;
And groundsel—something good to eat!
But, Lord! I'd outsing the morning stars,
For a lump of sugar between the bars!
I loathe this life. "*My child!*" *You* see!
Wait till she's dead—and I am free!'
Aghast, she stayed—her young cheeks blenched,
Mouth quivering, and fingers clenched—
'What right have you . . .?' she challenged, and then,
With a stifled sob, fell silent again.
'And now,' she shuddered, frowned, and said,
'It's closing time. And I'm for bed.'
She listened a moment, crossed the floor,
And, dumbing on tiptoe—thumb on latch—
The clapper-bell against its catch,
Stealthily drew wide the door.

All deathly still, the autumnal night
Hung starry and radiant, height to height,
Moon-cold hills and neighbouring wood.
Black shadows barred the empty street,
Dew-bright its cobbles at her feet,
And the dead leaves that sprinkled it.
With earthy, sour-sweet smell endued
The keen air coldly touched her skin—
Alone there, at the entering in.
Soon would the early frosts begin,
And the long winter's lassitude,
Mewed up, pent in, companionless.
No light in her mind to soothe and bless;
Only unbridled bitterness
Drummed in her blood against her side.

Her eyelids drooped, and every sense
Languished in secret virulence.
She turned and looked. 'You thought,' she cried,
Small and dull as a toneless bell,
'A silly, country wench like me,
Goose for the fox, befooled could be
By your fine speeches! "Hungry"? Well,
I've been in streets where misery is
Common as wayside blackberries—
Been, and come back; less young than wise.
Go to the parson, knock him up;
He'll dole you texts on which to sup.
Or if his tombstones strike too cold,
Try the old Squire at Biddingfold:
Ask there! He thinks the village pond's
The drink for rogues and vagabonds!'
The Hunter's Moon from a cloudless sky
In pallid splendour earthward yearned;
Dazzling in beauty, cheek and eye:
And her head's gold to silver turned.
Her fierce young face in that wild shine
Showed like a god's, morose, malign.

He rose: and face to face they stood
In sudden, timeless solitude.
The fevered frenzy in her blood
Ebbed, left enfeebled body and limb.
Appalled, she gazed at him,
Marvelling in horror of stricken heart,
In this strange scrutiny, at what
She saw but comprehended not.
Out of Astarte's borrowed light
She couched her face, to hide from sight
The tears of anguish and bitter pride
That pricked her eyes. 'My God,' she cried,
Pausing in misery on the word,
As if another's voice she had heard,
'Give—if you can—the devil his due—

I'd rather sup with him than you!
So get you gone; no more I want
Of you, and all your cant!' . . .
A hasty footstep neared; she stayed,
Outwardly bold, but sore afraid.
'Mother!' she mocked. 'Now we shall see
What comes of asking charity.'

Platter in hand, the frugal dame
Back to the counter bustling came.
Something, she saw, had gone amiss.
And one sharp look her daughter's way
Warned her of what she had best not say.
Fearing her tongue and temper, she
Spoke with a smiling asperity.
'Look, now,' she said, 'I've brought you this.
That slut of mine's an hour abed;
The oven chilled, the fire half dead,
The bellows vanished. . . . Well, you have seen
The mort of trouble it has been.
Still, there it is; and food at least.
My husband does not hold with waste;
That's been his maxim all life through.
What's more, it's in the Scriptures too.
By rights we are shut; it's growing late;
And as you can't bring back the plate,
Better eat here—if eat you must!
And now—ah, yes, you'll want a crust.
All this bread is for sale. I'll in
And see what leavings are in the bin.'
Their glances met. Hers winced, and fell;
But why it faltered she could not tell.

The slumbering cat awoke, arose—
Roused by the savour beneath his nose,
Arched his spine, with tail erect,
Stooped, gently sniffing, to inspect
The beggar's feast, gazed after her,
And, seeing her gone, began to purr.

Her daughter then, who had watched the while,
Drew near, and stroked him—with a smile
As sly with blandishment as guile.
Daintily, finger and thumb, she took
A morsel of meat from off the plate,
And with a sidling crafty look
Dangled it over him for a bait:
'No, no; say, please!' The obsequious cat
Reared to his haunches, with folded paws,
Round sea-green eyes, and hook-toothed jaws,
Mewed, snapped, and mouthed it down; and then
Up, like a mannet, sat, begging again.
'Fie, now; he's famished! Another bit?
Mousers by rights should hunt their meat!
That's what the Master says: isn't it?'
The creature fawned on her, and purred,
As if he had pondered every word.
Yet, mute the beggar stood, nor made
A sign he grudged this masquerade.
'I dote on cats,' the wanton said.
'Dogs grovel and cringe at every nod;
Making of man a kind of God!
Beat them or starve them, as you choose,
They crawl to you, whining, and lick your shoes.
Cats know their comfort, drowse and play,
And, when the dark comes, steal away—
Wild to the wild. Make *them* obey!
As soon make water run uphill.
I'm for the night; I crave the dark;
Would wail the louder to hear them bark;
Pleasure myself till the East turns grey.'
She eyed the low window; 'Welladay!
You the greyhound, and I the hare,
I warrant of coursing you'd have your share.'
Scrap after scrap she dangled, until
The dainty beast had gorged his fill,
And, lithe as a panther, sheened like silk,
Minced off to find a drink of milk.

'There! That's cat's thanks! His feasting done,
He's off—and half your supper gone! . . .
But, wise or foolish, you'll agree
You had done better to sup with me!'

The stranger gravely raised his head.
'Once was a harvest thick with corn
When I too heard the hunting-horn;
I, too, the baying, and the blood,
And the cries of death none understood.
He that in peace with God would live
Both hunter is and fugitive.
I came to this house to ask for bread,
We give but what we have,' he said;
'Are what grace makes of us, and win
The peace that is our hearts within.'
He ceased, and, yet more gravely, smiled.
'I would that ours were reconciled!'
So sharply intent were sense and ear
On his face and accents, she failed to hear
The meaning his words conveyed.
"*Peace!*" she mocked him. 'How pretty a jibe!
So jows the death-bell's serenade.
Try a less easy bribe!'

The entry darkly gaped. And through
The cold night air, a low *a-hoo*,
A-hoo, a-hoo, from out the wood,
Broke in upon their solitude;
A call, a bleak decoy, a cry,
Half weird lament, half ribaldry.
She listened, shivered; 'Pah!' whispered she,
'No peace of yours, my God, for me!
I have gone my ways, have eyes, and wits.
Am I a cat to feed on bits
Of dried-up Bible-meat? I know
What kind of bread has that for dough;
Yes, and how honey-sweet the leaven
That starves, on earth, to glut, in heaven!

Dupe was I? Well, come closer, look,
Is my face withered? Sight fall'n in?
Beak-sharp nose and gibbering chin?
Lips that no longer can sing, kiss, pout?
Body dry sinews, the fire gone out?
So it may be with me, Judgment Day;
And, men being men, of hope forsook,
Gold all dross—hair gone grey,
Love burnt to ashes.
Yet, still, I'd say—
Come then, to taunt me, though you may—
I'd treat hypocrites Pilate's way!
False, all false!—Oh, I can see,
You are not what you pretend to be!'

Weeping, she ceased; as flowerlike a thing
As frost ever chilled in an earthly spring.
Mingling moonlight and lamplight played
On raiment and hair; and her beauty arrayed
In a peace profound, as when in glade
On the confines of Eden, unafraid,
Cain and his brother as children strayed.

'What am I saying! I hear it. But none—
None is—God help me!—my own.'

Her mother, listening, had heard
That last low passionate broken word.
What was its meaning? Shame or fear—
It knelled its misery on her ear
Like voices in a dream.
And, as she brooded, deep in thought,
Trembling, though not with cold, she sought
In her one twinkling candle's beam
From stubborn memory to restore
Where she had seen this man before;
What, in his marred yet tranquil mien—
Dimmed by the veils of time between—
Had conjured the past so quickly back:

Hours when by hopes, proved false, beguiled,
She too had stubborn been and wild,
As vain; but not as lovely. Alas!
And, far from innocent, a child.
A glass hung near the chimney shelf—
She peered into its shadows, moved
By thoughts of one in youth beloved,
Long tongueless in the grave, whom yet
Rancour could shun, but not forget.
Was this blowsed woman here herself?
No answer made the image there—
Bartered but stare for stare.
She turned aside. What use to brood
On follies gone beyond recall—
Nothing to do the living good,
Secrets now shared by none; and all
Because this chance-come outcast had
Asked for alms a crust of bread.
Clean contrary to common sense,
She'd given him shelter, fetched him food—
Old scraps, maybe, but fit, at worst,
For her goodman; and warmed them first!
And this for grace and gratitude!
Charity brings scant recompense
This side of Jordan—from such as he!

But then; what meant that frenzied speech,
Cry of one loved, lost—out of reach,
From girlhood up unheard before,
And past all probing to explore?
What was between them—each with each?
What in the past lay hid?
Long since the tongue of envy had
Whispered its worst about her child;
Arrogant, beautiful, and wild;
And beauty tarnished may strive in vain
To win its market back again . . .
To what cold furies is life betrayed

When the ashes of youth begin to cool,
When things of impulse are done by rule,
When, sickened of faiths, hopes, charities,
The soul pines only to be at ease;
And—moulting vulture in stony den—
Waits for the end, Amen!

Thus, in the twinkling of an eye,
This heart-sick reverie swept by;
She must dissemble—if need be—lie;
Rid house and soul of this new pest,
Prudence would do the rest.
Muffling her purpose, aggrieved in mind,
In she went, and, knee on stool,
Deigning no glance at either, leant
Over the tarnished rail of brass
That curtained off the window-glass,
And, with a tug, drew down the blind.
'Lord's Day, to-morrow,' she shrugged. 'No shop!
Come, child, make haste; it's time to sup;
High time to put the shutters up.'
The shutters up: The shutters up—
Ticked the clock the silence through,
And a yet emptier silence spread.
Shunning the effort, she raised her head;
'And *you'll* be needing to go,' she said.
She seized a loaf, broke off a crust,
Turned, and, 'There's no stale left . . .' began
Coldly, and paused—her haunted eyes
Fixed on the grease-stains, where the cat,
Mumbling its gobbets, had feasting sat.
All doubting gone, pierced to the quick
At hint of this malignant trick,
Like spark in tinder, fire in rick,
A sudden rage consumed her soul,
Beyond all caution to control.
Ignored, disdained, deceived, defied!—
'Have you, my God!' she shrilled, 'no pride?
No shame?

Stranger, you say—and now, a friend!
Cheating and lies, from bad to worse—
Fouling your father's honest name—
Make *me*, you jade, your stalking-horse!
I've watched you, mooning, moping—ay,
And now, in my teeth, know why!'

A dreadful quiet spread, as when
Over Atlantic wastes of sea,
Black, tempest-swept, there falls a lull,
As sudden as it is momentary,
In the maniac tumult of wind and rain,
Boundless, measureless, monstrous: and then
The insensate din begins again.

The damsel stirred.
Jade—she had caught the bitter word;
Shame, cheating, lies. Crouched down, she stood,
Lost in a lightless solitude.
No matter; the words were said; all done.
And yet, how strange this woman should,
Self-blinded, have no heart to see
The secret of her misery;
Should think that she—all refuge gone,
And racked with hatred and shame, could be
The *friend* of this accursèd one!
The anguished blood had left her cheek
White as a leper's. With shaking head,
And eyes insanely wide and bleak,
Her body motionless as the dead,
At bay against a nameless fear,
She strove awhile in vain to speak.
Then, 'Thank you for *that*!' she whispered. 'Who
Betrayed me into a world like this,
Swarming with evil and deviltries?
Gave me these eyes, this mouth, these feet,
Flesh to hunger—and tainted meat?
Pampered me—flattered—yet taunted me when

Body and soul became prey to men,
And dog to its vomit returned again?
Ask me my name! *You*? Magdalen!
Devils? So be it. What brought me here?—
A stork in the chimney-stack, mother dear?
Oh, this false life! An instant gone
A voice within me said, *See! Have done,*
Take to you wings, and, ravening, flee,
Far from this foul hypocrisy!'
Like an old beldame's her fingers shook,
Mouth puckered, and the inning moon
Gleamed, as she cowered, on brow and eye,
Fixed now in torment on one near by.
'*Friend!* did you say? You heard that? You!—
Forsaken of God, a wandering Jew!
With milk for blood! Speak! Is it true?'

Beyond the threshold a stealthy breeze,
Faint with night's frost-cold fragrancies,
Stirred in the trees.
Ghostlike, on moon-patterned floor there came
A scamper of leaves. The lamp's dim flame
Reared smoking in the sudden draught.
He gazed, but answered not; the Jew.
Woe, beyond mortal eye to trace,
Watched through compassion in his face.
And though—as if the spirit within
Were striving through fleshly bonds to win
Out to its chosen—fiery pangs
Burned in her breast like serpent's fangs,
She lifted her stricken face, and laughed:
Hollowly, ribaldly, *Heugh, heugh, heugh!*
'A Jew! A Jew!'—
Ran, clawed, clutched up the bread and meat,
And flung them at his feet.
And then was gone; had taken her flight
Out through the doorway, into the street,

Into the quiet of the night,
On through the moon-chequered shadowy air;
Away, to where
In woodland of agelong oak and yew,
Echoing its vaulted dingles through,
Faint voices answered her—*Hoo! A-hoo!*
A-hoo! A-hoo!
A-hoo!

A PORTRAIT

A solemn plain-faced child stands gazing there,
Her small hand resting on a purple chair.
Her stone-grey waisted gown is looped with black;
Linked chain and star encircle a slender neck;
Knots of bright red deck wrist, breast, flaxen hair;
Shoulder to waist falls band of lettered gold:
Round-eyed, she watches me—this eight-year-old,
The ghost of her father in her placid stare.

Darkness beyond. A moment she and I
Engage in some abstruse small colloquy—
On time, art, beauty, life, mortality!
But of one secret not a hint creeps out—
What grave Velasquez talked to her about;
And from that shadow not a clapper cries
Where now the fowler weaves his subtleties.

BRUEGHEL'S WINTER

Jagg'd mountain peaks and skies ice-green
Wall in the wild cold scene below.
Churches, farms, bare copse, the sea
In freezing quiet of winter show;
Where ink-black shapes on fields in flood
Curling, skating, and sliding go.
To left, a gabled tavern; a blaze;
Peasants; a watching child; and lo,
Muffled, mute—beneath naked trees
In sharp perspective set a-row—
Trudge huntsmen, sinister spears aslant,

Dogs snuffling behind them in the snow;
And arrowlike, lean, athwart the air
Swoops into space a crow.

But flame, nor ice, nor piercing rock,
Nor silence, as of a frozen sea,
Nor that slant inward infinite line
Of signboard, bird, and hill, and tree,
Give more than subtle hint of him
Who squandered here life's mystery.

FALSTAFF

'Twas in a tavern that with old age stooped
And leaned rheumatic rafters o'er his head—
A blowzed, prodigious man, which talked, and stared,
And rolled, as if with purpose, a small eye
Like a sweet Cupid in a cask of wine.
I could not view his fatness for his soul,
Which peeped like harmless lightnings and was gone;
As haps to voyagers of the summer air.
And when he laughed, Time trickled down those beams,
As in a glass; and when in self-defence
He puffed that paunch, and wagged that huge, Greek head,
Nosed like a Punchinello, then it seemed
A hundred widows wept in his small voice,
Now tenor, and now bass of drummy war.
He smiled, compact of loam, this orchard man;
Mused like a midnight, webbed with moonbeam snares
Of flitting Love; woke—and a King he stood,
Whom all the world hath in sheer jest refused
For helpless laughter's sake. And then, forfend!
Bacchus and Jove reared vast Olympus there;
And Pan leaned leering from Promethean eyes.
'Lord!' sighed his aspect, weeping o'er the jest,
'What simple mouse brought such a mountain forth?'

MACBETH

Rose, like dim battlements, the hills and reared
Steep crags into the fading primrose sky;
But in the desolate valleys fell small rain,
Mingled with drifting cloud. I saw one come,
Like the fierce passion of that vacant place,
His face turned glittering to the evening sky;
His eyes, like grey despair, fixed satelessly
On the still, rainy turrets of the storm;
And all his armour in a haze of blue.
He held no sword, bare was his hand and clenched,
As if to hide the inextinguishable blood
Murder had painted there. And his wild mouth
Seemed spouting echoes of deluded thoughts.
Around his head, like vipers all distort,
His locks shook, heavy-laden, at each stride.
If fire may burn invisible to the eye;
O, if despair strive everlastingly;
Then haunted here the creature of despair,
Fanning and fanning flame to lick upon
A soul still childish in a blackened hell.

BANQUO

What dost thou here far from thy native place?
What piercing influences of heaven have stirred
Thy heart's last mansion all-corruptible to wake,
To move, and in the sweets of wine and fire
Sit tempting madness with unholy eyes?
Begone, thou shuddering, pale anomaly!
The dark presses without on yew and thorn;
Stoops now the owl upon her lonely quest;
The pomp runs high here, and our beauteous women
Seek no cold witness—O, let murder cry,
Too shrill for human ear, only to God.

Come not in power to wreak so wild a vengeance!

Thou knowest not now the limit of man's heart;
He is beyond thy knowledge. Gaze not then,
Horror enthroned lit with insanest light!

MERCUTIO

Along an avenue of almond-trees
Came three girls chattering of their sweethearts three.
And lo! Mercutio, with Byronic ease,
Out of his philosophic eye cast all
A mere flowered twig of thought, whereat—
Three hearts fell still as when an air dies out
And Venus falters lonely o'er the sea.
But when within the furthest mist of bloom
His step and form were hid, the smooth child Ann
Said, 'La, and what eyes he had!' and Lucy said,
'How sad a gentleman!' and Katherine,
'I wonder, now, what mischief he was at.'
And these three also April hid away,
Leaving the Spring faint with Mercutio.

JULIET'S NURSE

In old-world nursery vacant now of children,
With posied walls, familiar, fair, demure,
And facing southward o'er romantic streets,
Sits yet and gossips winter's dusk away
One gloomy, vast, glossy, and wise, and sly:
And at her side a cherried country cousin.
Her tongue claps ever like a ram's sweet bell;
There's not a name but calls a tale to mind—
Some marrowy patty of farce or melodram;
There's not a soldier but hath babes in view;
There's not on earth what minds not of the midwife:
'O, widowhood that left me still espoused!'
Beauty she sighs o'er, and she sighs o'er gold;
Gold will buy all things, even a sweet husband,

Else only Heaven is left and—farewell youth!
Yet, strangely, in that money-haunted head,
The sad, gemmed crucifix and incense blue
Is childhood come again. Her memory
Is like an ant-hill which a twig disturbs,
But twig stilled never. And to see her face,
Broad with sleek homely beams; her babied hands,
Ever like 'lighting doves, and her small eyes—
Blue wells a-twinkle, arch and lewd and pious—
To darken all sudden into Stygian gloom,
And paint disaster with uplifted whites,
Is life's epitome. She prates and prates—
A waterbrook of words o'er twelve small pebbles.
And when she dies—some grey, long, summer evening,
When the bird shouts of childhood through the dusk,
'Neath night's faint tapers—then her body shall
Lie stiff with silks of sixty thrifty years.

IAGO

A dark lean face, a narrow, slanting eye,
Whose deeps of blackness one pale taper's beam
Haunts with a flitting madness of desire;
A heart whose cinder at the breath of passion
Glows to a momentary core of heat
Almost beyond indifference to endure:
So parched Iago frets his life away.
His scorn works ever in a brain whose wit
This world hath fools too many and gross to seek.
Ever to live incredibly alone,
Masked, shivering, deadly, with a simple Moor
Of idiot gravity, and one pale flower
Whose chill would quench in everlasting peace
His soul's unmeasured flame—O paradox!
Might he but learn the trick!—to wear her heart
One fragile hour of heedless innocence,
And then, farewell, and the incessant grave.

'O fool! O villain!'—'tis the shuttlecock
Wit never leaves at rest. It is his fate
To be a needle in a world of hay,
Where honour is the flattery of the fool;
Sin, a tame bauble; lies, a tiresome jest;
Virtue, a silly, whitewashed block of wood
For words to fell. Ah! but the secret lacking,
The secret of the child, the bird, the night,
Faded, flouted, bespattered, in days so far
Hate cannot bitter them, nor wrath deny;
Else were this Desdemona. . . . Why!
Woman a harlot is, and life a nest
Fouled by long ages of forked fools. And God—
Iago deals not with a tale so dull:
To have made the world! Fie on thee, Artisan!

IMOGEN

Even she too dead! all languor on her brow,
All mute humanity's last simpleness,—
And yet the roses in her cheeks unfallen!
Can death haunt silence with a silver sound?
Can death, that hushes all music to a close,
Pluck one sweet wire scarce-audible that trembles
As if a little child, called Purity,
Sang heedlessly on of his dear Imogen?
Surely if some young flowers of Spring were put
Into the tender hollow of her heart,
'Twould faintly answer, trembling in their petals.
Poise but a wild bird's feather, it will stir
On lips that even in silence wear the badge
Only of truth. Let but a cricket wake,
And sing of home, and bid her lids unseal
The unspeakable hospitality of her eyes.
O childless soul—call once her husband's name!
And even if indeed from these green hills
Of England, far, her spirit flits forlorn,
Back to its youthful mansion it will turn,

Back to the floods of sorrow these sweet locks
Yet heavy bear in drops; and Night shall see,
Unwearying as her stars, still Imogen,
Pausing 'twixt death and life on one hushed word.

POLONIUS

There haunts in Time's bare house an active ghost,
Enamoured of his name, Polonius.
He moves small fingers much, and all his speech
Is like a sampler of precisest words,
Set in the pattern of a simpleton.
His mirth floats eerily down chill corridors;
His sigh—it is a sound that loves a keyhole;
His tenderness a faint court-tarnished thing;
His wisdom prates as from a wicker cage;
His very belly is a pompous nought;
His eye a page that hath forgot his errand.
Yet in his bran—his spiritual bran—
Lies hid a child's demure, small, silver whistle
Which, to his horror, God blows, unawares,
And sets men staring. It is sad to think,
Might he but don indeed thin flesh and blood,
And pace important to Law's inmost room,
He would see, much marvelling, one immensely wise,
Named Bacon, who, at sound of his youth's step,
Would turn and call him Cousin—for the likeness.

OPHELIA

There runs a crisscross pattern of small leaves
Espalier, in a fading summer air,
And there Ophelia walks, an azure flower,
Whom wind, and snowflakes, and the sudden rain
Of love's wild skies have purified to heaven.

There is a beauty past all weeping now
In that sweet, crooked mouth, that vacant smile;
Only a lonely grey in those mad eyes,
Which never on earth shall learn their loneliness.
And when amid startled birds she sings lament,
Mocking in hope the long voice of the stream,
It seems her heart's lute hath a broken string.
Ivy she hath, that to old ruin clings;
And rosemary, that sees remembrance fade;
And pansies, deeper than the gloom of dreams;
But ah! if utterable, would this earth
Remain the base, unreal thing it is?
Better be out of sight of peering eyes;
Out—out of hearing of all-useless words,
Spoken of tedious tongues in heedless ears.
And lest, at last, the world should learn heart-secrets;
Lest that sweet wolf from some dim thicket steal;
Better the glassy horror of the stream.

HAMLET

Umbrageous cedars murmuring symphonies
Stooped in late twilight o'er dark Denmark's Prince:
He sat, his eyes companioned with dream—
Lustrous large eyes that held the world in view
As some entrancèd child's a puppet show.
Darkness gave birth to the all-trembling stars,
And a far roar of long-drawn cataracts,
Flooding immeasurable night with sound.
He sat so still, his very thoughts took wing,
And, lightest Ariels, the stillness haunted
With midge-like measures; but, at last, even they
Sank 'neath the influences of his night.
The sweet dust shed faint perfume in the gloom;
Through all wild space the stars' bright arrows fell
On the lone Prince—the troubled son of man—
On Time's dark waters in unearthly trouble:

Then, as the roar increased, and one fair tower
Of cloud took sky and stars with majesty,
He rose, his face a parchment of old age,
Sorrow hath scribbled o'er, and o'er, and o'er.

OLD SUSAN

When Susan's work was done, she'd sit,
With one fat guttering candle lit,
And window opened wide to win
The sweet night air to enter in.
There, with a thumb to keep her place,
She'd read, with stern and wrinkled face,
Her mild eyes gliding very slow
Across the letters to and fro,
While wagged the guttering candle flame
In the wind that through the window came.
And sometimes in the silence she
Would mumble a sentence audibly,
Or shake her head as if to say,
'You silly souls, to act this way!'
And never a sound from night I'd hear,
Unless some far-off cock crowed clear;
Or her old shuffling thumb should turn
Another page; and rapt and stern,
Through her great glasses bent on me,
She'd glance into reality;
And shake her round old silvery head,
With—'You!—I thought you was in bed!'—
Only to tilt her book again,
And rooted in Romance remain.

OLD BEN

Sad is old Ben Thistlethwaite,
  Now his day is done,
And all his children
  Far away are gone.

He sits beneath his jasmined porch,
  His stick between his knees,
His eyes fixed, vacant,
  On his moss-grown trees.

Grass springs in the green path,
  His flowers are lean and dry,
His thatch hangs in wisps against
  The evening sky.

He has no heart to care now,
  Though the winds will blow
Whistling in his casement,
  And the rain drip through.

He thinks of his old Bettie,
  How she would shake her head and say,
'You'll live to wish my sharp old tongue
  Could scold—some day.'

But as in pale high autumn skies
  The swallows float and play,
His restless thoughts pass to and fro,
  But nowhere stay.

Soft, on the morrow, they are gone;
  His garden then will be
Denser and shadier and greener,
  Greener the moss-grown tree.

MISS LOO

When thin-strewn memory I look through,
I see most clearly poor Miss Loo;
Her tabby cat, her cage of birds,
Her nose, her hair, her muffled words,
And how she'd open her green eyes,
As if in some immense surprise,
Whenever as we sat at tea
She made some small remark to me.

It's always drowsy summer when
From out the past she comes again;
The westering sunshine in a pool
Floats in her parlour still and cool;
While the slim bird its lean wires shakes,
As into piercing song it breaks;

Till Peter's pale-green eyes ajar
Dream, wake; wake, dream, in one brief bar.
And I am sitting, dull and shy,
And she with gaze of vacancy,
And large hands folded on the tray,
Musing the afternoon away;
Her satin bosom heaving slow
With sighs that softly ebb and flow,
And her plain face in such dismay,
It seems unkind to look her way:
Until all cheerful back will come
Her gentle gleaming spirit home:
And one would think that poor Miss Loo
Asked nothing else, if she had you.

THE TAILOR

Few footsteps stray when dusk droops o'er
The tailor's old stone-lintelled door.
There sits he, stitching, half asleep,
Beside his smoky tallow dip.
'*Click, click,*' his needle hastes, and shrill
Cries back the cricket beneath the sill.
Sometimes he stays, and over his thread
Leans sidelong his old tousled head;
Or stoops to peer with half-shut eye
When some strange footfall echoes by;
Till clearer gleams his candle's spark
Into the dusty summer dark.

Then from his cross legs he gets down,
To find how dark the evening's grown;
And hunched up in his door he'll hear
The cricket whistling crisp and clear;
And so beneath the starry grey
He'll mutter half a seam away.

THE SLEEPER

As Ann came in one summer's day, .
  She felt that she must creep,
So silent was the clear cool house,
  It seemed a house of sleep.
And sure, when she pushed open the door,
  Rapt in the stillness there,
Her mother sat, with stooping head,
  Asleep upon a chair;
Fast—fast asleep; her two hands laid
  Loose-folded on her knee,
So that her small unconscious face
  Looked half unreal to be:
So calmly lit with sleep's pale light
  Each feature was; so fair
Her forehead—every trouble was
  Smoothed out beneath her hair.
But though her mind in dream now moved,
  Still seemed her gaze to rest—
From out beneath her fast-sealed lids,
  Above her moving breast—
On Ann; as quite, quite still she stood;
  Yet slumber lay so deep
Even her hands upon her lap
  Seemed saturate with sleep.
And as Ann peeped, a cloudlike dread
  Stole over her, and then,
On stealthy, mouselike feet she trod,
  And tiptoed out again.

THE BLIND BOY

'I have no master,' said the Blind Boy,
  'My mother, "Dame Venus" they do call;
Cowled in this hood she sent me begging
  For whate'er in pity may befall.

'Hard was her visage, me adjuring,—
  "Have no fond mercy on the kind!
Here be sharp arrows, bunched in quiver,
  Draw close ere striking—thou art blind."

'So stand I here, my woes entreating,
  In this dark alley, lest the Moon
Point with her sparkling my barbed armoury,
  Shine on my silver-lacèd shoon.

'Oh, sir, unkind this Dame to me-ward;
  Of the salt billow was her birth. . . .
In your sweet charity draw nearer
  The saddest rogue on Earth!'

THE VEIL

I think and think; yet still I fail—
Why does this lady wear a veil?
Why thus elect to mask her face
Beneath that dainty web of lace?
The tip of a small nose I see,
And two red lips, set curiously
Like twin-born cherries on one stem,
And yet she has netted even them.
Her eyes, it's plain, survey with ease
All that to glance upon they please.
Yet, whether hazel, grey, or blue,
Or that even lovelier lilac hue,
I cannot guess: why—why deny
Such beauty to the passer-by?

Out of a bush a nightingale
May expound his song; beneath that veil
A happy mouth no doubt can make
English sound sweeter for its sake.
But then, why muffle in, like this,
What every blossomy wind would kiss?
Why in that little night disguise
A daylight face, those starry eyes?

ISAAC MEEK

AN EPITAPH

Hook-nosed was I, loose-lipped; greed fixed its gaze
In my young eyes ere they knew brass from gold;
Doomed to the blazing market-place my days—
A sweated chafferer of the bought and sold.
Fawned on and spat at, flattered and decried—
One only thing men asked of me—my price.
I lived, detested; and deserted, died,
Scorned by the virtuous, and the jest of vice.
And now, behold, blest child of Christ, my worth;
Stoop close: I have inherited the earth!

A YOUNG GIRL

I search in vain your childlike face to see
The thoughts that hide behind the words you say;
I hear them singing, but close-shut from me
Dream the enchanted woods through which they stray.
Cheek, lip, and brow—I glance from each to each,
And watch that light-winged Mercury, your hand;
And sometimes when brief silence falls on speech
I seem your hidden self to understand.

Mine a dark fate. Behind his iron bars
The captive broods, with ear and heart a-strain

For jangle of key, for glimpse of moon or stars,
Grey shaft of daylight, sighing of the rain.
Life built these walls. Past all my dull surmise
Must burn the inward innocence of your eyes.

POLLIE

Pollie is a simpleton;
'Look!' she cries, 'that *lovely* swan!'
And, even before her transports cease,
  Adds, 'But I do love geese.'

When a lark wings up the sky,
She'll sit with lips ajar, then sigh—
For rapture; and the rapture o'er,
  Whisper, 'What's music *for*?'

Every lesson I allot,
As soon as learned is clean forgot.
'L-O-V . . .?' I prompt. And she
  Smiles, but I catch no 'E'.

It seems in her round head you come
As if to a secret vacuum;
Whence then the wonder, love and grace
  Shining in that small face?

THE WIDOW

Grief now hath pacified her face;
Even hope might share so still a place.
Yet, if—in silence of her heart—
A memoried voice or footstep start,
Or a chance word of ecstasy
Cry through dim-cloistered memory,
Into her eyes her soul will steal
To gaze on the irrevocable—
As if death had not power to keep
One, who had loved her long, so long asleep.

Now all things lovely she looks on
Wear the mute aspect of oblivion;
And all things silent seem to be
Richer than any melody.
Her narrow hands, like birds that make
A nest for some old instinct's sake,
Have hollowed a refuge for her face—
A narrow and a darkened place—
Where, far from the world's light, she may
See clearer what is passed away:
And only little children know
Through what dark half-closed gates her smile may go

'HERE SLEEPS'

Here sleeps, past earth's awakening,
A woman, true and pretty;
Who was herself in everything—
Tender, and grave, and witty.
Her smallest turn of foot, hand, head,
Was way of wind with water;
So with her thoughts and all she said—
It seemed her heart had taught her.
O thou most dear and loving soul
Think not I shall forget thee;
Nor take amiss what here is writ
For those who never met thee!

THEY TOLD ME

They told me Pan was dead, but I
  Oft marvelled who it was that sang
Down the green valleys languidly
  Where the grey elder-thickets hang.

Sometimes I thought it was a bird
  My soul had charged with sorcery;
Sometimes it seemed my own heart heard
  Inland the sorrow of the sea.

But even where the primrose sets
  The seal of her pale loveliness,
I found amid the violets
  Tears of an antique bitterness.

REMEMBRANCE

The sky was like a waterdrop
  In shadow of a thorn,
Clear, tranquil, beautiful,
  Dark, forlorn.

Lightning along its margin ran;
  A rumour of the sea
Rose in profundity and sank
  Into infinity.

Lofty and few the elms, the stars
  In the vast boughs most bright;
I stood a dreamer in a dream
  In the unstirring night.

Not wonder, worship, not even peace
  Seemed in my heart to be:
Only the memory of one,
  Of all most dead to me.

NOD

Softly along the road of evening,
  In a twilight dim with rose,
Wrinkled with age, and drenched with dew,
  Old Nod, the shepherd, goes.

His drowsy flock streams on before him,
  Their fleeces charged with gold,
To where the sun's last beam leans low
  On Nod the shepherd's fold.

The hedge is quick and green with brier,
  From their sand the conies creep;
And all the birds that fly in heaven
  Flock singing home to sleep.

His lambs outnumber a noon's roses,
  Yet, when night's shadows fall,
His blind old sheep-dog, Slumber-soon,
  Misses not one of all.

His are the quiet steeps of dreamland,
  The waters of no-more-pain,
His ram's bell rings 'neath an arch of stars,
  'Rest, rest, and rest again.'

ESTRANGED

No one was with me there—
Happy I was—alone;
Yet from the sunshine suddenly
A joy was gone.

A bird in an empty house
Sad echoes makes to ring,
Flitting from room to room
On restless wing:

Till from its shades he flies,
And leaves forlorn and dim
The narrow solitudes
So strange to him.

So, when with fickle heart
I joyed in the passing day,
A presence my mood estranged
Went grieved away.

FAITHLESS

The words you said grow faint;
The lamp you lit burns dim;
Yet, still be near your faithless friend
To urge and counsel him.

Still with returning feet
To where life's shadows brood,
With steadfast eyes made clear in death
Haunt his vague solitude.

So he, beguiled with earth,
Yet with its vain things vexed,
Keep even to his own heart unknown
Your memory unperplexed.

TO E. T.: 1917

You sleep too well—too far away,
  For sorrowing word to soothe or wound;
Your very quiet seems to say
  How longed-for a peace you have found.

Else, had not death so lured you on,
  You would have grieved—'twixt joy and fear—
To know how my small loving son
  Had wept for you, my dear.

SOTTO VOCE

TO EDWARD THOMAS

The haze of noon wanned silver-grey
The soundless mansion of the sun;
The air made visible in his ray,
Like molten glass from furnace run,
Quivered o'er heat-baked turf and stone
And the flower of the gorse burned on—
Burned softly as gold of a child's fair hair
Along each spiky spray, and shed
Almond-like incense in the air
Whereon our senses fed.

At foot—a few sparse harebells: blue
And still as were the friend's dark eyes
That dwelt on mine, transfixèd through
With sudden ecstatic surmise.

'Hst!' he cried softly, smiling, and lo,
Stealing amidst that maze gold-green,
I heard a whispering music flow
From guileful throat of bird, unseen:—
So delicate the straining ear
Scarce carried its faint syllabling
Into a heart caught up to hear

That inmost pondering
Of bird-like self with self. We stood,
In happy trance-like solitude,
Hearkening a lullay grieved and sweet—
As when on isle uncharted beat
'Gainst coral at the palm-tree's root,
With brine-clear, snow-white foam afloat,
The wailing, not of water or wind—
A husht, far, wild, divine lament,
When Prospero his wizardry bent
Winged Ariel to bind. . . .

Then silence, and oer-flooding noon.
I raised my head; smiled too. And he—
Moved his great hand, the magic gone—
Gently amused to see
My ignorant wonderment. He sighed.
'It was a nightingale,' he said,
'That *sotto voce* cons the song
He'll sing when dark is spread;
And Night's vague hours are sweet and long,
And we are laid abed.'

TO K. M.

And there was a horse in the king's stables: and the name of the horse was, Genius.

We sat and talked. . . It was June, and the summer light
Lay fair upon ceiling and wall as the day took flight.
Tranquil the room—with its colours and shadows wan,
Cherries, and china, and flowers: and the hour slid on.
Dark hair, dark eyes, slim fingers—you made the tea,
Pausing with spoon uplifted, to speak to me.
Lulled by our thoughts and our voices, how happy were we!

And, musing, an old, old riddle crept into my head.
'Supposing I just say, *Horse in a field*,' I said,
'What do you *see*?' And we each made answer: 'I—
A roan—long tail, and a red-brick house, near by.'

'I—an old cart-horse and rain!' 'Oh no, not rain;
A mare with a long-legged foal by a pond—oh plain!'
'And I, a hedge—and an elm—and the shadowy green
Sloping gently up to the blue, to the west, I mean!' . . .

And now: on the field that I see night's darkness lies.
A brook brawls near: there are stars in the empty skies.
The grass is deep, and dense. As I push my way,
From sour-nettled ditch sweeps fragrance of clustering may.
I come to a stile. And lo, on the further side,
With still, umbrageous, night-clad fronds, spread wide,
A giant cedar broods. And in crescent's gleam—
A horse, milk-pale, sleek-shouldered, engendered of dream!
Startled, it lifts its muzzle, deep eyes agaze,
Silk-plaited mane . . .
'Whose pastures are thine to graze?
Creature, delicate, lovely, with woman-like head,
Sphinx-like, gazelle-like? Where tarries thy rider?' I said.
And I scanned by that sinking ship's thin twinkling shed
A high-pooped saddle of leather, night-darkened red,
Stamped with a pattern of gilding; and over it thrown
A cloak, chain-buckled, with one great glamorous stone,
Wan as the argent moon when o'er fields of wheat
Like Dian she broods, and steals to Endymion's feet.
Interwoven with silver that cloak from seam to seam.
And at toss of that head from its damascened bridle did beam
Mysterious glare in the dead of the dark. . . .
'Thy name,
Fantastical steed? Thy pedigree?
Peace, out of Storm, is the tale? Or *Beauty, of Jeopardy*?'
The water grieves. Not a footfall—and midnight here.
Why tarries Darkness's bird? Mounded and clear
Slopes to yon hill with its stars the moorland sweet.
There sigh the airs of far heaven. And the dreamer's feet
Scatter the leagues of paths secret to where at last meet
Roads called Wickedness, Righteousness, broad-flung or strait,
And the third that leads on to the Queen of fair Elfland's gate. . .

This then the horse that I see; swift as the wind;
That none may master or mount; and none may bind—
But she, his Mistress: cloaked, and at throat that gem—
Dark hair, dark eyes, slim shoulder. . . .
God-speed, K. M.!

NOT ONLY

Not only ruins their lichen have;
Nor tombs alone, their moss.
Implacable Time, in markless grave,
Turns what seemed gold to dross.

Yet—a mere ribbon for the hair,
A broken toy, a faded flower
A passionate deathless grace may wear,
Denied its passing hour.

WAITING

'Waiting to . . .'
'Who is?'
'We are . . .
Was that the night-owl's cry?
'I heard not. But see! the evening star;
And listen!—the ocean's solacing sigh.'
'You mean the surf at the harbour bar?'
'What did you say?'
'Oh, "waiting".'
'"Waiting?"—
Waiting what for?'
'To die.'

THE DREAMER

The woods were still. No breath of air
  Stirred in leaf or brake.
Cold hung the rose, unearthly fair;
  The nightingale, awake,
In rusted coverts of the may
  Shook out his bosom's down;

Alone, upon her starry way,
  The moon, to fulness grown,
Moved, shining, through her misty meads;
  And, roofless from the dew,
Knelt way-worn Love, with idle beads,
  And dreamed of you.

SALLIE'S MUSICAL BOX

Once it made music, tiny, frail, yet sweet--
Bead-note of bird where earth and elfland meet.
Now its thin tinkling stirs no more, since she
Whose toy it was, has gone; and taken the key.

SWALLOWS FLOWN

Whence comes that small continuous silence
  Haunting the livelong day?
This void, where a sweetness, so seldom heeded,
  Once ravished my heart away?
As if a loved one, too little valued,
  Had vanished—could not stay?

Mingled the moonlight with daylight—the last in the narrowing west;
Silence of nightfall lay over the shallowing valleys at rest
In the Earth's green breast:
Yet a small multitudinous singing, a lully of voices of birds,
Unseen in the vague shelving hollows, welled up with my questioning words:
All Dorsetshire's larks for connivance of sweetness seemed trysting to greet
Him in whose song the bodings of raven and nightingale meet.

Stooping and smiling, he questioned, 'No birdnotes myself do I hear?
Perhaps 'twas the talk of chance farers, abroad in the hush with us here—
In the dusk-light clear?'
And there peered from his eyes, as I listened, a concourse of women and men,
Whom his words had made living, long-suffering—they flocked to remembrance again;
'O Master,' I cried in my heart, 'lorn thy tidings, grievous thy song;
Yet thine, too, this solacing music, as we earthfolk stumble along.'

AWAY

There is no sorrow
Time heals never;
No loss, betrayal,
Beyond repair.
Balm for the soul, then,
Though grave shall sever
Lover from loved
And all they share;
See, the sweet sun shines,
The shower is over,

Flowers preen their beauty,
The day how fair!
Brood not too closely
On love, or duty;
Friends long forgotten
May wait you where
Life with death
Brings all to an issue;
None will long mourn for you.
Pray for you, miss you,
Your place left vacant,
You not there.

'OH, WHY?'

Oh, why make such ado—
This fretful care and trouble?
The sun in noonday's blue
Pours radiance on earth's bubble.
What though the heart-strings crack,
And sorrow bid thee languish,
Dew falls; the night comes back;
Sleep, and forget thine anguish.
Oh, why in shadow haunt?
Shines not the evening flower?
Hark, how the sweet birds chaunt,
The lovely light their bower.
Water her music makes,
Lulling even these to slumber;
And only dead of darkness wakes
  Stars without number.

SORCERY

'What voice is that I hear
  Crying across the pool?'
'It is the voice of Pan you hear,
Crying his sorceries shrill and clear,
  In the twilight dim and cool.'

'What song is it he sings,
  Echoing from afar;
While the sweet swallow bends her wings,
Filling the air with twitterings,
  Beneath the brightening star?'

The woodman answered me,
  His faggot on his back:—
'Seek not the face of Pan to see;
Flee from his clear note summoning thee
  To darkness deep and black!'

'He dwells in thickest shade,
  Piping his notes forlorn
Of sorrow never to be allayed;
Turn from his coverts sad
  Of twilight unto morn!'

The woodman passed away
  Along the forest path;
His axe shone keen and grey
In the last beams of day:
  And all was still as death:—

Only Pan singing sweet
  Out of Earth's fragrant shade;
I dreamed his eyes to meet,
And found but shadow laid
  Before my tired feet.

Comes no more dawn to me,
  Nor bird of open skies.
Only his woods' deep gloom I see
  Till, at the end of all, shall rise,
Afar and tranquilly,
  Death's stretching sea.

THULE

If thou art sweet as they are sad
  Who on the shores of Time's salt sea
Watch on the dim horizon fade
  Ships bearing love to night and thee;

If past all beacons Hope hath lit
  In the dark wanderings of the deep
They who unwilling traverse it
  Dream not till dawn unseal their sleep;

Ah, cease not in thy winds to mock
  Us, who yet wake, but cannot see
Thy distant shores; who at each shock
  Of the waves onset faint for thee!

EVEN IN THE GRAVE

I laid my inventory at the hand
  Of Death, who in his gloomy arbour sate;
  And while he conned it, sweet and desolate
I heard Love singing in that quiet land.

He read the record even to the end—
  The heedless, livelong injuries of Fate,
  The burden of foe, the burden of love and hate;
The wounds of foe, the bitter wounds of friend:

All, all, he read, ay, even the indifference,
  The vain talk, vainer silence, hope and dream.
He questioned me: 'What seek'st thou then instead?'
  I bowed my face in the pale evening gleam.
Then gazed he on me with strange innocence:
  'Even in the grave thou wilt have thyself,' he said.

BRIGHT LIFE

'Come now,' I said, 'put off these webs of death,
  Distract this leaden yearning of thine eyes
  From lichened banks of peace, sad mysteries
Of dust fallen-in where passed the flitting breath:
Turn thy sick thoughts from him that slumbereth
  In mouldered linen to the living skies,
  The sun's bright-clouded principalities,
The salt deliciousness the sea-breeze hath!

Lay thy warm hand on earth's cold clods and think
  What exquisite greenness sprouts from these to grace
The moving fields of summer; on the brink
  Of archèd waves the sea-horizon trace,
Whence wheel's night's galaxy; and in silence sink
  The pride in rapture of life's dwelling-place!'

THE KEYS OF MORNING

While at her bedroom window once,
  Learning her task for school,
Little Louisa lonely sat
  In the morning clear and cool,

She slanted her small bead-brown eyes
  Across the empty street,
And saw Death softly watching her
  In the sunshine pale and sweet.

His was a long lean sallow face;
  He sat with half-shut eyes,
Like an old sailor in a ship
  Becalmed 'neath tropic skies.
Beside him in the dust he had set
  His staff and shady hat;
These, peeping small, Louisa saw
  Quite clearly where she sat—
The thinness of his coal-black locks,
  His hands so long and lean
They scarcely seemed to grasp at all
  The keys that hung between:
Both were of gold, but one was small,
  And with this last did he
Wag in the air, as if to say,
  'Come hither, child, to me!'

Louisa laid her lesson book
  On the cold window-sill;
And in the sleepy sunshine house
  Went softly down, until
She stood in the half-opened door,
  And peeped. But strange to say,
Where Death just now had sunning sat
  Only a shadow lay:
Just the tall chimney's round-topped cowl,
  And the small sun behind,
Had with its shadow in the dust
  Called sleepy Death to mind.
But most she thought how strange it was
  Two keys that he should bear,
And that, when beckoning, he should wag
  The littlest in the air.

ALONE

A very old woman
Lives in yon house.
The squeak of the cricket,
The stir of the mouse,
Are all she knows
Of the earth and us.

Once she was young,
Would dance and play,
Like many another
Young popinjay;
And run to her mother
At dusk of day.

And colours bright
She delighted in;
The fiddle to hear,
And to lift her chin,
And sing as small
As a twittering wren.

But age apace
Comes at last to all;
And a lone house filled
With the cricket's call;
And the scampering mouse
In the hollow wall.

THE BINDWEED

The bindweed roots pierce down
  Deeper than men do lie,
Laid in their dark-shut graves
  Their slumbering kinsmen by.

Yet what frail thin-spun flowers
  She casts into the air,
To breathe the sunshine, and
  To leave her fragrance there.

But when the sweet moon comes,
  Showering her silver down,
Half-wreathèd in faint sleep,
  They droop where they have blown.

So all the grass is set,
  Beneath her trembling ray,
With buds that have been flowers,
  Brimmed with reflected day.

THE STRANGER

Half-hidden in a graveyard,
  In the blackness of a yew,
Where never living creature stirs,
  Nor sunbeam pierces through,

Is a tomb-stone, green and crooked—
  Its faded legend gone—
With one rain-worn cherub's head
  To sing of the unknown.

There, when the dusk is falling,
  Silence broods so deep
It seems that every air that breathes
  Sighs from the fields of sleep.

Day breaks in heedless beauty,
  Kindling each drop of dew,
But unforsaking shadow dwells
  Beneath this lonely yew.

And, all else lost and faded,
  Only this listening head
Keeps with a strange unanswering smile
  Its secret with the dead.

NEVER MORE, SAILOR

Never more, Sailor,
Shalt thou be
Tossed on the wind-ridden,
Restless sea.
Its tides may labour;
All the world
Shake 'neath that weight
Of waters hurled:
But its whole shock
Can only stir
Thy dust to a quiet
Even quieter.
Thou mock'st at land
Who now art come
To such a small
And shallow home;
Yet bore the sea
Full many a care
For bones that once
A sailor's were.
And though the grave's
Deep soundlessness
Thy once sea-deafened
Ear distress,
No robin ever
On the deep
Hopped with his song
To haunt thy sleep.

BEWARE!

An ominous bird sang from its branch,
'Beware, O Wanderer!
Night 'mid her flowers of glamourie spilled
Draws swiftly near:

'Night with her darkened caravans,
Piled deep with silver and myrrh,
Draws from the portals of the East,
O Wanderer, near.

'Night who walks plumèd through the fields
Of stars that strangely stir—
Smitten to fire by the sandals of him
Who walks with her.'

AN EPITAPH

Here lies a most beautiful lady,
Light of step and heart was she;
I think she was the most beautiful lady
That ever was in the West Country.

But beauty vanishes; beauty passes;
However rare—rare it be;
And when I crumble, who will remember
This lady of the West Country?

'THE HAWTHORN HATH A DEATHLY SMELL'

The flowers of the field
Have a sweet smell;
Meadowsweet, tansy, thyme,
And faint-heart pimpernel;
But sweeter even than these,
The silver of the may
Wreathed is with incense for
The Judgment Day.

An apple, a child, dust,
  When falls the evening rain,
Wild brier's spicèd leaves,
  Breathe memories again;
With further memory fraught,
  The silver of the may
Wreathed is with incense for
  The Judgment Day.

Eyes of all loveliness—
  Shadow of strange delight,
Even as a flower fades
  Must thou from sight;
But, oh, o'er thy grave's mound,
  Till come the Judgment Day,
Wreathed shall with incense be
  Thy sharp-thorned may.

A SIGN

How shall I know when the end of things is coming?
The dark swifts flitting, the drone-bees humming;
The fly on the window-pane bedazedly strumming;
Ice on the waterbrooks their clear chimes dumbing—
How shall I know that the end of things is coming?

The stars in their stations will shine glamorous in the black:
Emptiness, as ever, haunt the great Star Sack;
And Venus, proud and beautiful, go down to meet the day,
Pale in phosphorescence of the green sea spray—
How shall I know that the end of things is coming?

Head asleep on pillow; the peewits at their crying;
A strange face in dreams to my rapt phantasma sighing;
Silence beyond words of anguished passion;
Or stammering an answer in the tongue's cold fashion—
How shall I know that the end of things is coming?

Haply on strange roads I shall be, the moorland's peace around me;
Or counting up a fortune to which Destiny hath bound me;
Or—Vanity of Vanities—the honey of the Fair;
Or a greybeard, lost to memory, on the cobbles in my chair—
How shall I know that the end of things is coming?

The drummers will be drumming; the fiddlers at their thrumming;
Nuns at their beads; the mummers at their mumming;
Heaven's solemn Seraph stoopt weary o'er his summing;
The palsied fingers plucking, the way-worn feet numbing—
And the end of things coming.

MISTRESS FELL

'Whom seek you here, sweet Mistress Fell?'
'One who loved me passing well.
Dark his eye, wild his face—
Stranger, if in this lonely place
Bide such an one, then, prythee, say
I am come here to-day.'

'Many his like, Mistress Fell?'
'I did not look, so cannot tell.
Only this I surely know,
When his voice called me, I must go;
Touched me his fingers, and my heart
Leapt at the sweet pain's smart.'

'Why did he leave you, Mistress Fell?'
'Magic laid its dreary spell—
Stranger, he was fast asleep;
Into his dream I tried to creep;
Called his name, soft was my cry;
He answered—not one sigh.

'The flower and the thorn are here;
Falleth the night-dew, cold and clear;
Out of her bower the bird replies,
Mocking the dark with ecstasies,
See how the earth's green grass doth grow,
Praising what sleeps below!

'Thus have they told me. And I come,
As flies the wounded wild-bird home.
Not tears I give; but all that he
Clasped in his arms, sweet charity;
All that he loved—to him I bring
For a close whispering.'

THE OLD MEN

Old and alone, sit we,
  Caged, riddle-rid men;
Lost to Earth's 'Listen!' and 'See!'
  Thought's 'Wherefore?' and 'When?'

Only far memories stray
  Of a past once lovely, but now
Wasted and faded away,
  Like green leaves from the bough.

Vast broods the silence of night,
  The ruinous moon
Lifts on our faces her light,
  Whence all dreaming is gone.

We speak not; trembles each head;
  In their sockets our eyes are still;
Desire as cold as the dead;
  Without wonder or will.

And One, with a lanthorn, draws near,
At clash with the moon in our eyes:
'Where art thou?' he asks: 'I am here,'
One by one we arise.

And none lifts a hand to withhold
A friend from the touch of that foe:
Heart cries unto heart, 'Thou art old!'
Yet, reluctant, we go.

THE FOOL'S SONG

Never, no never, listen too long,
To the chattering wind in the willows, the night bird's song.

'Tis sad in sooth to lie under the grass,
But none too gladsome to wake and grow cold where life's
shadows pass.

Dumb the old Toll-Woman squats,
And, for every green copper battered and worn, doles out Nevers
and Nots.

I know a Blind Man, too,
Who with a sharp ear listens and listens the whole world through.

Oh, sit we snug to our feast,
With platter and finger and spoon—and good victuals at least.

DUST TO DUST

Heavenly Archer, bend thy bow;
Now the flame of life burns low,
Youth is gone; I, too, would go.

Ever Fortune leads to this:
Harsh or kind, at last she is
Murderess of all ecstasies.

Yet the spirit, dark, alone,
Bound in sense, still hearkens on
For tidings of a bliss foregone.

Sleep is well for dreamless head,
At no breath astonishèd,
From the Gardens of the Dead.

I the immortal harps hear ring,
By Babylon's river languishing.
Heavenly Archer, loose thy string.

FARE WELL

When I lie where shades of darkness
Shall no more assail mine eyes,
Nor the rain make lamentation
    When the wind sighs;
How will fare the world whose wonder
Was the very proof of me?
Memory fades, must the remembered
    Perishing be?

Oh, when this my dust surrenders
Hand, foot, lip, to dust again,
May these loved and loving faces
    Please other men!
May the rusting harvest hedgerow
Still the Traveller's Joy entwine,
And as happy children gather
    Posies once mine.

Look thy last on all things lovely,
Every hour. Let no night
Seal thy sense in deathly slumber
    Till to delight
Thou have paid thy utmost blessing;
Since that all things thou wouldst praise
Beauty took from those who loved them
    In other days.

GOOD-BYE

The last of last words spoken is, Good-bye—
The last dismantled flower in the weed-grown hedge,
The last thin rumour of a feeble bell far ringing,
The last blind rat to spurn the mildewed rye.

A hardening darkness glasses the haunted eye,
Shines into nothing the watcher's burnt-out candle,
Wreathes into scentless nothing the wasting incense,
Faints in the outer silence the hunting-cry.

Love of its muted music breathes no sigh,
Thought in her ivory tower gropes in her spinning,
Toss on in vain the whispering trees of Eden,
Last of all last words spoken is, Good-bye.

THE GALLIASS

'Tell me, tell me,
Unknown stranger,
When shall I sight me
That tall ship
On whose flower-wreathed counter is gilded,
Sleep?'

'Landsman, landsman,
Lynx nor kestrel
Ne'er shall descry from
Ocean steep
That midnight-stealing, high-pooped galliass,
Sleep.'

'Promise me, Stranger,
Though I mark not
When cold night-tide's
Shadows creep,
Thou wilt keep unwavering watch for *Sleep.*'

'Myriad the lights are,
Wayworn landsman,
Rocking the dark through
On the deep:
She alone burns none to prove her *Sleep*.'

WHO?

1st Stranger: Who walks with us on the hills?
2nd Stranger: I cannot see for the mist.
3rd Stranger: Running water I hear,
Keeping lugubrious tryst
With its cresses and grasses and weeds,
In the white obscure light from the sky.
2nd Stranger: *Who walks with us on the hills?*
Wild Bird: Ay! . . . Aye! . . . *Ay!* . . .

THE LAST COACHLOAD

TO COLIN

Crashed through the woods that lumbering Coach. The dust
Of flinted roads bepowdering felloe and hood.
Its gay paint cracked, its axles red with rust,
It lunged, lurched, toppled through a solitude

Of whispering boughs, and feathery, nid-nod grass.
Plodded the fetlocked horses. Glum and mum,
Its ancient Coachman recked not where he was,
Nor into what strange haunt his wheels were come.

Crumbling the leather of his dangling reins;
Worn to a cow's tuft his stumped, idle whip;
Sharp eyes of beast and bird in the trees' green lanes
Gleamed out like stars above a derelict ship.

'Old Father Time—Time—Time!' jeered twittering throat.
A squirrel capered on the leader's rump,
Slithered a weasel, peered a thief-like stoat,
In sandy warren beat on the coney's thump.

Mute as a mammet in his saddle sate
The hunched Postilion, clad in magpie trim;
The bright flies buzzed around his hairless pate;
Yaffle and jay squawked mockery at him.

Yet marvellous peace and amity breathed there.
Tranquil the labyrinths of this sundown wood.
Musking its chaces, bloomed the brier-rose fair;
Spellbound as if in trance the pine-trees stood.

Through moss and pebbled rut the wheels rasped on;
That Ancient drowsing on his box. And still
The bracken track with glazing sunbeams shone;
Laboured the horses, straining at the hill. . . .

But now—a verdurous height with eve-shade sweet;
Far, far to West the Delectable Mountains glowed.
Above, Night's canopy; at the horses' feet
A sea-like honied waste of flowers flowed.

There fell a pause of utter quiet. And—
Out from one murky window glanced an eye,
Stole from the other a lean, groping hand,
The padded door swung open with a sigh.

And—*Exeunt Omnes!* None to ask the fare—
A myriad human Odds in a last release
Leap out incontinent, snuff the incensed air;
A myriad parched-up voices whisper, 'Peace.'

On, on, and on—a stream, a flood, they flow.
O wondrous vale of jocund buds and bells!
Like vanishing smoke the rainbow legions glow,
Yet still the enravished concourse sweeps and swells.

All journeying done. Rest now from lash and spur—
Laughing and weeping, shoulder and elbow—'twould seem
That Coach capacious all Infinity were,
And these the fabulous figments of a dream.

Mad for escape; frenzied each breathless mote,
Lest rouse the Old Enemy from his death-still swoon,
Lest crack that whip again—they fly, they float,
Scamper, breathe—'Paradise!' abscond, are gone. . . .

AN EPITAPH

Last, Stone, a little yet;
And then this dust forget.
But thou, fair Rose, bloom on.
For she who is gone
Was lovely too; nor would she grieve to be
Sharing in solitude her dreams with thee.

WHAT?

What dost thou surely know?
What will the truth remain,
When from the world of men thou go
To the unknown again?

What science—of what hope?
What heart-loved certitude won
From thought shall then for scope
Be thine—thy thinking done?

'Tis said, that even the wise,
When plucking at the sheet,
Have smiled with swift-darkening eyes,
As if in vision fleet

Of some mere flower, or bird,
Seen in dream, or in childhood's play;
And then, without sign or word,
Have turned from the world away.

THE HOUSE

'Mother, it's such a lonely house,'
The child cried; and the wind sighed.
'A narrow but a lovely house,'
The mother replied.

'Child, it is such a narrow house,'
The ghost cried; and the wind sighed.
'A narrow and a lonely house,'
The withering grass replied.

THE TACITURN

Countless these crosses and these ruinous stones,
Which taunt the living with but sighs and groans!
Thou canst not in this quiet a moment stray
But dust cries, *Vanity!* and, *Welladay!*
Not mine such tedious tidings, Stranger. Yet,
Think not because I am silent, I forget.

THE THORN

O thou who pausest here,
With naught but some thorned wilding near
To tell of beauty; be not sad.
For he who in this grave is laid
Would give the all on earth he had
One moment but by thee to stand
And with warm hand touch hand.

ARIEL

This lad, when but a child of six,
Had learned how earth and heaven may mix—
At this so innocent an age
He, as light Ariel, trod the stage;

So nimble-tongued, and silver-fleet,
Air, fire, did in one body meet.
Ay; had he hied to where the bones
Of Shakespeare lie 'neath Stratford's stones,
And whispered: 'Master, hearken!'—so:
One might have answered—Prospero!

BENEATH A MOTIONLESS YEW

Beneath a motionless yew, and tower,
Hoary with age, whose clock's one bell
Of Sexton Time had hour by hour
As yet in vain rung out the knell,

A worn old woman, in her black,
Knelt in the green churchyard alone;
And, self-forgotten, crook'd arm, bent back,
Scrubbed at her husband's burial stone.

Here lies J—— H——: Aged 34:
'He giveth his beloved sleep':
Fainter the letters than of yore—
Where lichens had begun to creep—

Showed 'neath the pale-blue vacant sky,
Under that dust-dry shadowiness;
She stayed to read—with a long sigh,
Less of regret than weariness.

Evening's last gleam now tinged the yew;
The gilded hand jerked on; a bird
Made stony rattle; and anew
She scanned the tombstone's every word.

For forty years she had kept her tryst,
And grief long since had ceased to upbraid
Him whose young love she had sorely missed,
And at whose side she would soon be laid.

Tired out, and old; past hope or thought,
She pined no more to meet some day
Her dead; and yet, still faithfully sought
To wash the stains of Time away.

THE SNOWFLAKE

See, now, this filigree: 'tis snow,
Shaped, in the void, of heavenly dew;
On winds of space like flower to blow
In a wilderness of blue.

Black are those pines. The utter cold
Hath frozen to silence the birds' green woods.
Rime hath ensteeled the wormless mould,
A vacant quiet broods.

Lo, this entrancèd thing!—a breath
Of life that bids Man's heart to crave
Still for perfection: ere fall death,
And earth shut in his grave.

EVENING

The little cirque, horizon-wide,
Of earth now swiftly draws away,
Though fulling moon aloft doth ride
Into the sun's perpetual day.

Little? It's all I have. For space
Than time itself's no less confined:
Its only being is what has place
At pin-point moment in the mind.

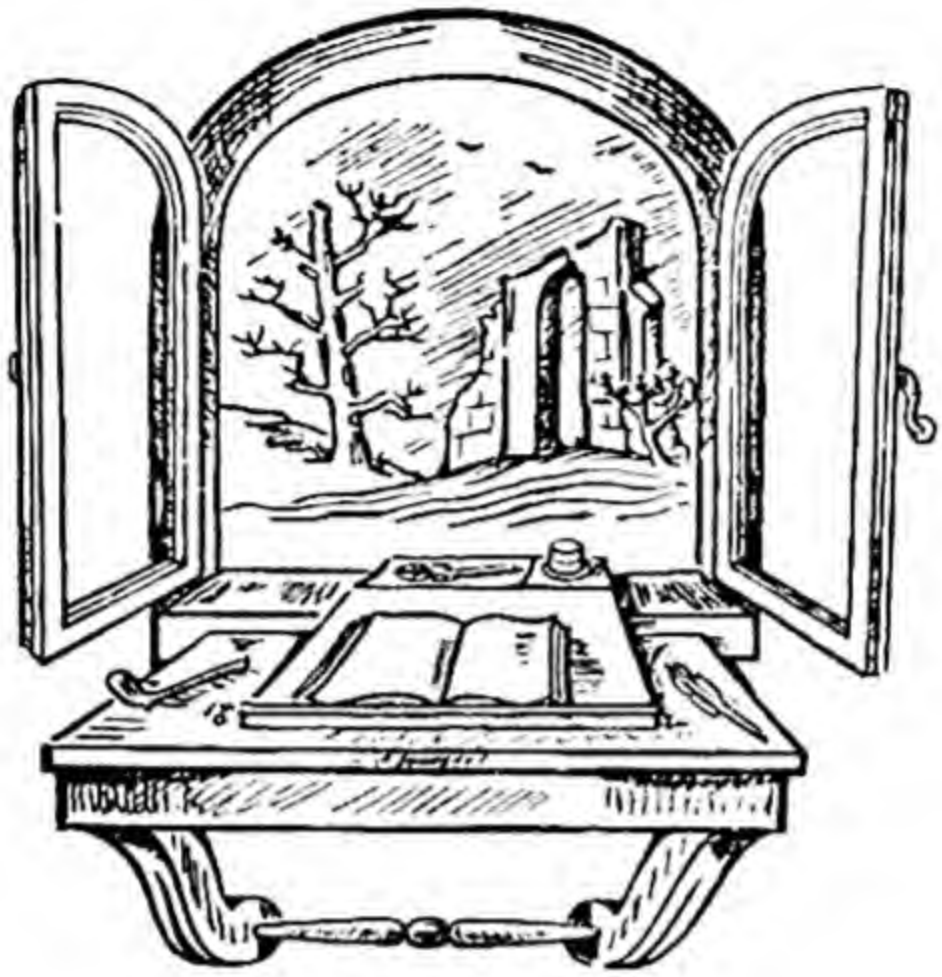
All history, knowledge, wisdom, power,
All man has said, or done, or made—
As transitory as a flower—
For me on this scant thread is stayed.

The all, the one; their better and worse,
Interdependent ever remain;
Each instant is my universe;
Which at a nod may fade again.

At the last slumber's nod, what then?

THE CAGE

Thou angel face!—like a small exquisite cage,
Such as some old Chinese
Once spent his love and skill on—youth to age,
In hope its destined prisoner to please;
And then had empty left; since he had heard
What death would do in setting free the bird.



SHADOW

Even the beauty of the rose doth cast,
When its bright, fervid noon is past,
A still and lengthening shadow in the dust
    Till darkness come
    And take its strange dream home.

The transient bubbles of the water paint
'Neath their frail arch a shadow faint;
The golden nimbus of the windowed saint,
    Till shine the stars,
    Casts pale and trembling bars.

The loveliest thing earth hath, a shadow hath,
A dark and livelong hint of death,
Haunting it ever till its last faint breath. . .
    Who, then, may tell
The beauty of heaven's shadowless asphodel?

UNREGARDING

Put by thy days like withered flowers
    In twilight hidden away:
Memory shall up-build thee bowers
    Sweeter than they.

Hoard not from swiftness of thy stream
    The shallowest cruse of tears:
Pools still as heaven shall lovelier dream
    In future years.

Squander thy love as she that flings
Her soul away on night;
Lovely are love's far echoings,
Height unto height.

O, make no compact with the sun,
No compact with the moon!
Night falls full-cloaked, and light is gone
Sudden and soon.

THE MIRACLE

Who beckons the green ivy up
Its solitary tower of stone?
What spirit lures the bindweed's cup
Unfaltering on;
Calls even the starry lichen to climb
By agelong inches endless Time?

Who bids the hollyhock uplift
Her rod of fast-sealed buds on high;
Fling wide her petals—silent, swift,
Lovely to the sky?
Since as she kindled, so she will fade,
Flower above flower in squalor laid.

Ever the heavy billow rears
All its sea-length in green, hushed wall;
But totters as the shore it nears,
Foams to its fall;
Where was its mark? on what vain quest
Rose that great water from its rest? . . .

So creeps ambition on; so climb
Man's vaunting thoughts. He, set on high,
Forgets his birth, small space, brief time,
That he shall die;
Dreams blindly in his stagnant air;
Consumes his strength; strips himself bare;

Rejects delight, ease, pleasure, hope;
  Seeking in vain, but seeking yet,
Past earthly promise, earthly scope,
      On one aim set:
As if, like Chaucer's child, he thought
All but '*O Alma!*' nought.

KEEP INNOCENCY

Like an old battle, youth is wild
With bugle and spear, and counter cry,
Fanfare and drummery, yet a child
Dreaming of that sweet chivalry,
The piercing terror cannot see.

He, with a mild and serious eye,
Along the azure of the years,
Sees the sweet pomp sweep hurtling by;
But he sees not death's blood and tears,
Sees not the plunging of the spears.

And all the strident horror of
Horse and rider, in red defeat,
Is only music fine enough
To lull him into slumber sweet
In fields where ewe and lambkin bleat.

O, if with such simplicity
Himself take arms and suffer war;
With beams his targe shall gilded be,
Though in the thickening gloom be far
The steadfast light of any star!

Though hoarse War's eagle on him perch,
Quickened with guilty lightnings—there
It shall in vain for terror search,
Where a child's eyes 'neath bloody hair
Gaze purely through the dingy air.

And when the wheeling rout is spent,
Though in the heaps of slain he lie;
Or lonely in his last content;
Quenchless shall burn in secrecy
The flame Death knows his victors by.

VOICES

Who is it calling by the darkened river
Where the moss lies smooth and deep,
And the dark trees lean unmoving arms,
Silent and vague in sleep,
And the bright-heeled constellations pass
In splendour through the gloom;
Who is it calling o'er the darkened river
In music, 'Come!'?

Who is it wandering in the summer meadows
Where the children stoop and play
In the green faint-scented flowers, spinning
The guileless hours away?
Who touches their bright hair? who puts
A wind-shell to each cheek,
Whispering betwixt its breathing silences,
'Seek! seek!'?

Who is it watching in the gathering twilight
When the curfew bird hath flown
On eager wings, from song to silence,
To its darkened nest alone?
Who takes for brightening eyes the stars,
For locks the still moonbeam,
Sighs through the dews of evening peacefully
Falling, 'Dream!'?

THE HAPPY ENCOUNTER

I saw sweet Poetry turn troubled eyes
  On shaggy Science nosing on the grass,
  For by that way poor Poetry must pass
On her long pilgrimage to Paradise.
He snuffled, grunted, squealed; perplexed by flies,
  Parched, weatherworn, and near of sight, alas,
  From peering close where very little was
In dens secluded from the open skies.

But Poetry in bravery went down,
  And called his name, soft, clear, and fearlessly;
Stooped low, and stroked his muzzle overgrown;
  Refreshed his drought with dew; wiped pure and free
  His eyes: and lo! laughed loud for joy to see
In those grey deeps the azure of her own.

HUMANITY

'Ever exulting in thyself; on fire
  To flaunt the purple of the Universe,
  To strut and strut, and thy great part rehearse;
Ever the slave of every proud desire;
Come now a little down where sports thy sire;
  Choose thy small better from thy abounding worse;
  Prove thou thy lordship who hadst dust for nurse,
And for thy swaddling the primeval mire!'

Then stooped our Manhood nearer, deep and still,
  As from earth's mountains an unvoyaged sea;
Hushed my faint voice in its great peace until
  It seemed but a bird's cry in eternity;
And in its future loomed the undreamable,
  And in its past slept simple men like me.

VIRTUE

Her breast is cold; her hands how faint and wan!
And the deep wonder of her starry eyes
Seemingly lost in cloudless Paradise,
And all earth's sorrows out of memory gone.
Yet sings her clear voice unrelenting on
Of loveliest impossibilities;
Though echo only answer her with sighs
Of effort wasted and delights forgone.

Spent, baffled, wildered, hated and despised,
Her straggling warriors hasten to defeat;
By wounds distracted, and by night surprised,
Fall where death's darkness and oblivion meet:
Yet, yet: O breast how cold! O hope how far!
Grant my son's ashes lie where these men are!

DREAMS

Be gentle, O hands of a child;
Be true: like a shadowy sea
In the starry darkness of night
Are your eyes to me.

But words are shallow, and soon
Dreams fade that the heart once knew;
And youth fades out in the mind,
In the dark eyes too.

What can a tired heart say,
Which the wise of the world have made dumb?
Save to the lonely dreams of a child,
'Return again, come!'

ALL THAT'S PAST

Very old are the woods;
  And the buds that break
Out of the brier's boughs,
  When March winds wake,
So old with their beauty are—
  Oh, no man knows
Through what wild centuries
  Roves back the rose.

Very old are the brooks;
  And the rills that rise
Where snow sleeps cold beneath
  The azure skies
Sing such a history
  Of come and gone,
Their every drop is as wise
  As Solomon.

Very old are we men;
  Our dreams are tales
Told in dim Eden
  By Eve's nightingales;
We wake and whisper awhile,
  But, the day gone by,
Silence and sleep like fields
  Of amaranth lie.

WHEN THE ROSE IS FADED

When the rose is faded,
  Memory may still dwell on
Her beauty shadowed,
  And the sweet smell gone.

That vanishing loveliness,
  That burdening breath
No bond of life hath then
  Nor grief of death.

'Tis the immortal thought
  Whose passion still
Makes of the changing
  The unchangeable.

Oh, thus thy beauty,
  Loveliest on earth to me,
Dark with no sorrow, shines
  And burns, with Thee.

SLEEP

Men all, and birds, and creeping beasts,
  When the dark of night is deep,
From the moving wonder of their lives
  Commit themselves to sleep.

Without a thought, or fear, they shut
  The narrow gates of sense;
Heedless and quiet, in slumber turn
  Their strength to impotence.

The transient strangeness of the earth
  Their spirits no more see:
Within a silent gloom withdrawn,
  They slumber in secrecy.

Two worlds they have—a globe forgot,
  Wheeling from dark to light;
And all the enchanted realm of dream
  That burgeons out of night.

HAUNTED

The rabbit in his burrow keeps
No guarded watch, in peace he sleeps;
The wolf that howls in challenging night
Cowers to her lair at morning light;
The simplest bird entwines a nest
Where she may lean her lovely breast,
Couched in the silence of the bough:—
But thou, O man, what rest hast thou?

Thy emptiest solitude can bring
Only a subtler questioning
In thy divided heart. Thy bed
Recalls at dawn what midnight said.
Seek how thou wilt to feign content,
Thy flaming ardour's quickly spent;
Soon thy last company is gone,
And leaves thee—with thyself—alone.

Pomp and great friends may hem thee round,
A thousand busy tasks be found;
Earth's thronging beauties may beguile
Thy longing lovesick heart awhile;
And pride, like clouds of sunset, spread
A changing glory round thy head;
But fade with all; and thou must come,
Hating thy journey, homeless, home.

Rave how thou wilt; unmoved, remote,
That inward presence slumbers not,
Frets out each secret from thy breast,
Gives thee no rally, pause, nor rest,
Scans close thy very thoughts, lest they
Should sap his patient power away;
Answers thy wrath with peace, thy cry
With tenderest taciturnity.

SILENCE

With changeful sound life beats upon the ear;
  Yet, striving for release,
  The most seductive string's
    Sweet jargonings,
    The happiest throat's
  Most easeful, lovely notes
Fall back into a veiling silentness.

Ev'n 'mid the rumour of a moving host,
  Blackening the clear green earth,
  Vainly 'gainst that thin wall
    The trumpets call,
    Or with loud hum
  The smoke-bemuffled drum:
From that high quietness no reply comes forth.

When, all at peace, two friends at ease alone
  Talk out their hearts—yet still,
  Between the grace-notes of
    The voice of love
    From each to each
  Trembles a rarer speech,
And with its presence every pause doth fill.

Unmoved it broods, this all-encompassing hush
  Of one who stooping near,
  No smallest stir will make
    Our fear to wake;
    But yet intent
  Upon some mystery bent
Hearkens the lightest word we say, or hear.

EYES

O strange devices that alone divide
The seër from the seen—
The very highway of earth's pomp and pride
That lies between
The traveller and the cheating, sweet delight
Of where he longs to be,
But which, bound hand and foot, he, close on night,
Can only see.

THE DISGUISE

Why in my heart, O Grief,
Dost thou in beauty hide?
Dead is my well-content,
And buried deep my pride.
Cold are their stones, beloved,
To hand and side.

The shadows of evening are gone,
Shut are the day's clear flowers,
Now have her birds left mute
Their singing bowers,
Lone shall we be, we twain,
In the night hours.

Thou with thy cheek on mine,
And dark hair loosed, shalt see
Take the far stars for fruit
The cypress tree,
And in the yew's black
Shall the moon be.

We will tell no old tales,
Nor heed if in wandering air
Die a lost song of love
Or the once fair;
Still as well-water be
The thoughts we share!

And, while the ghosts keep
Tryst from chill sepulchres,
Dreamless our gaze shall sleep,
And sealed our ears;
Heart unto heart will speak,
Without tears.

O, thy veiled, lovely face—
Joy's strange disguise—
Shall be the last to fade
From these rapt eyes,
Ere the first dart of daybreak
Pierce the skies.

VAIN QUESTIONING

What needest thou?—a few brief hours of rest
Wherein to seek thyself in thine own breast;
A transient silence wherein truth could say
Such was thy constant hope, and this thy way?—
O burden of life that is
A livelong tangle of perplexities!

What seekest thou?—a truce from that thou art;
Some steadfast refuge from a fickle heart;
Still to be thou, and yet no thing of scorn,
To find no stay here, and yet not forlorn?—
O riddle of life that is
An endless war 'twixt contrarieties.

Leave this vain questioning. Is not sweet the rose?
Sings not the wild bird ere to rest he goes?
Hath not in miracle brave June returned?
Burns not her beauty as of old it burned?
O foolish one to roam
So far in thine own mind away from home!

Where blooms the flower when her petals fade,
Where sleepeth echo by earth's music made,
Where all things transient to the changeless win,
There waits the peace thy spirit dwelleth in.

THE SCRIBE

What lovely things
  Thy hand hath made:
The smooth-plumed bird
  In its emerald shade,
The seed of the grass,
  The speck of stone
Which the wayfaring ant
  Stirs—and hastes on!

Though I should sit
  By some tarn in thy hills,
Using its ink
  As the spirit wills
To write of Earth's wonders,
  Its live, willed things,
Flit would the ages
  On soundless wings
Ere unto Z
  My pen drew nigh;
Leviathan told,
  And the honey-fly:
And still would remain
  My wit to try—
My worn reeds broken,
  The dark tarn dry,
All words forgotten—
  Thou, Lord, and I.

THE FLOWER

Horizon to horizon, lies outspread
The tenting firmament of day and night;
Wherein are winds at play; and planets shed
Amid the stars their gentle gliding light.

The huge world's sun flames on the snow-capped hills;
Cindrous his heat burns in the sandy plain;
With myriad spume-bows roaring ocean swills
The cold profuse abundance of the rain.

And man—a transient object in this vast,
Sighs o'er a universe transcending thought,
Afflicted by vague bodings of the past,
Driven toward a future, unforeseen, unsought.

Yet, see him, stooping low to naked weed
That meeks its blossom in his anxious eye,
Mark how he grieves, as if his heart did bleed,
And wheels his wondrous features to the sky;
As if, transfigured by so small a grace,
He sought Companion in earth's dwelling-place.

BEFORE DAWN

Dim-berried is the mistletoe
With globes of sheenless grey,
The holly mid ten thousand thorns
Smoulders its fires away;
And in the manger Jesu sleeps
This Christmas Day.

Bull unto bull with hollow throat
Makes echo every hill,
Cold sheep in pastures thick with snow
The air with bleatings fill;
While of his mother's heart this Babe
Takes His sweet will.

All flowers and butterflies lie hid,
The blackbird and the thrush
Pipe but a little as they flit
Restless from bush to bush;
Even to the robin Gabriel hath
Cried softly, 'Hush!'

Now night's astir with burning stars
In darkness of the snow;
Burdened with frankincense and myrrh
And gold the Strangers go
Into a dusk where one dim lamp
Burns faintly, Lo!

No snowdrop yet its small head nods,
In winds of winter drear;
No lark at casement in the sky
Sings matins shrill and clear;
Yet in this frozen mirk the Dawn
Breathes, Spring is here!

THE HOUR-GLASS

Thou who know'st all the sorrows of this earth—
I pray Thee, ponder, ere again Thou turn
Thine hour-glass o'er again, since one sole birth,
To poor clay-cold humanity, makes yearn
A heart at passion with life's endless coil.
Thou givest thyself too strait a room therein.
For so divine a tree too poor a soil.
For so great agony what small peace to win.
Cast from that Ark of Heaven which is Thy home
The raven of hell may wander without fear;
But sadly wings the dove o'er floods to roam,
Nought but one tender sprig his eyes to cheer.
Nay, Lord, I speak in parables. But see!
'Tis stricken Man in Men that pleads with Thee.

THE CORNER STONE

Sterile these stones
By time in ruin laid.
Yet many a creeping thing
Its haven has made
In these least crannies, where falls
Dark's dew, and noonday shade.

The claw of the tender bird
Finds lodgement here;
Dye-winged butterflies poise;
Emmet and beetle steer
Their busy course; the bee
Drones, laden, near.

Their myriad-mirrored eyes
Great day reflect.
By their exquisite farings
Is this granite specked;
Is trodden to infinite dust;
By gnawing lichens decked.

Toward what eventual dream
Sleeps its cold on,
When into ultimate dark
These lives shall be gone,
And even of man not a shadow remain
Of all he has done?

A RIDDLE

The mild noon air of Spring again
Lapped shimmering in that sea-lulled lane.
Hazel was budding; wan as snow
The leafless blackthorn was a-blow.

A chaffinch clankt, a robin woke
An eerie stave in the leafless oak.
Green mocked at green; lichen and moss
The rain-worn slate did softly emboss.

From out her winter lair, at sigh
Of the warm South wind, a butterfly
Stepped, quaffed her honey; on painted fan
Her labyrinthine flight began.

Wondrously solemn, golden and fair,
The high sun's rays beat everywhere;
Yea, touched my cheek and mouth, as if,
Equal with stone, to me 'twould give

Its light and life.
O restless thought,
Contented not! With 'Why' distraught.
Whom asked you then your riddle small?—
'If hither came no man at all

'Through this grey-green, sea-haunted lane,
Would it mere blackened naught remain?
Strives it this beauty and life to express
Only in human consciousness?

'Or, rather, idly breaks he in
To an Eden innocent of sin;
And, prouder than to be afraid,
Forgets his Maker in the made?'

NEWS

'Hearken! 'Tis news I cry!'
The shades drift by . . .
'Strange and ominous things:
A four-foot Beast upon Wings,

Thieves in a burning Mill,
An empty Cross on a Hill,
Ravin of swine in Beauty's places,
And a Woman with two Faces!
News!—News! I call. . . .'

But a wind from the cold unknown
Scatters the words as they fall—
Into naught they are blown.
What do these Walkers seek,
Pranked up in silk and in flax,
With a changeless rose on the cheek,
And Hell's hump on their backs?
These of the mincing gait,
And an ape in each sidelong leer;
These for the Way that is strait
To the pomp-hung bier;
These of the wasted dream,
Of the loveless silver and gold,
And the worm of disgust in them
That shall never grow old?

'Not unto such I cry,
But to thee, O Solitary! . . .
The world founders in air,
Plague-stricken Vanity Fair
Dyed hath its booths with blood;
Quenched are its stars in mud;
Come now the Mourners to chaunt
End and lament.'

There is a stream I know,
Sullen in flood its waters flow,
Heavy with secrets, slow,
Leaden and lightless, deep
With slumber and sleep.
Shall not even Innocence find
Peace of body and mind?

'Ay, but thou also art old,
And there's news to be told.
News, strange to hearing and sight . . .
It is Winter. And Night.
An icy and pitiless moon
Witched hath our sea-tides. And soon
The Nymph in her grottoes will hear
The loud trumpet of fear!
She weepeth cold tears in the sea! . . .
You shall *buy* not such tidings of me:
Stoop an ear, bow a desolate head:
It is breathed, "Love is dead".'

REFLECTIONS.

Three Sisters—and the youngest
  Was yet lóvelier to see
Than wild flower palely blooming
  Under Ygdrasil Tree;

Than this well at the woodside
  Whose wáters silver shów,
Though in womb of the blind earth
  Ink-like, ebon, they flow.

Creeps on the belled bindweed;
  The bee, in hoverings nigh,
Sucks his riches of nectar;
  Clouds float in the sky;

And she, O pure vanity,
  Newly-wakened, at that brink,
Crouches close, smiling dreamlike,
  To gaze, not to drink.

She sees not earth's morning
  Darkly framed in that cold deep:
Naught, naught but her beauty
  Made yet fairer by sleep.

And though glassed in that still flood
  She peer long, and long,
As faithful stays that image,
  As echo is to song . . .

Anon—in high noontide
  Comes her sister, wan with fear,
Lest the love in her bosom
  Even the bright birds should hear

Wail divine grieved enchantment.
  She kneels; and, musing, sighs;
Unendurable strangenesses
  Darken the eyes

That meet her swift searchings.
  From her breast there falls a flower.
Down, down—as she ponders—
  The fair petals shower,

Hiding brow, mouth, cheek—all
  That reflected there is seen.
And she gone, that Mirror
  As of old rests serene. . . .

Comes moth-light, faint dusk-shine,
  The green woods still and whist;
And their sister, the eldest
  To keep her late tryst.

Long thought and lone broodings
  Have wanned, have withered, lined
A face, without beauty,
  Which no dream hath resigned

To love's impassioned grieving.
  She stands. The louring air
Breathes cold on her cheekbone,
  Stirs thief-like her hair;

And a still quiet challenge
  Fills her dark, her flint-grey eyes,
As she lifts her bowed head
  To survey the cold skies.

Wherein stars, hard and restless,
  Burn in station fore-ordained,
As if mocking for ever
  A courage disdained.

And she stoops wearied shoulders,
  Void of scorn, of fear, or ruth,
To confront in that well-spring
  The dark gaze of Truth.

SELF TO SELF

Wouldst thou then happy be
On earth, where woes are many?
Where naught can make agree
Men paid for wage a penny?
Wherein ambition hath
Set up proud gate to Death;
And fame with trump and drum
Cannot undeaf the dumb
Who unto dust are come?
Would'st thou then happy be?—
Impossibility?

Maybe, when reasons rule
Dunces kept in at school;
Or while mere Logic peers
Sand-blind at her bright shears
Snip-snapping this, and this,
Ay, on my soul, it is—
Till, looking up, thou see
Noonday's immensity,
And, turning back, see too
That in a bead of dew.

Heart-near or fancy-far,
All's thine to make or mar.
Thine its sole consciousness,
Whether thou ban or bless.
Loving delight forgot,
Life's very roots must rot.
Be it for better or worse,
Thou art thy universe.
If then at length thou must
Render them both to dust,
Go with their best in trust.
If thou wake never—well:
But if perchance thou find
Light, that brief gloom behind,
Thou'lt have wherewith to tell
If thou'rt in heaven or hell.

MAKING A FIRE

Scatter a few cold cinders into the empty grate;
On these lay paper puffed into airy balloon,
Then wood—parched dry by the suns of Summer drowsy and sweet;
A flash, a flare, a flame; and a fire will be burning soon—

Fernlike, fleet, and impetuous. But unless you give heed,
It will faint, fade, fall, lose fervour, ash away out.
So is it with anger in heart and in brain; the insensate seed
Of dangerous fiery enkindling leaps into horror and rout;

But remaining untended, it dies. And the soul within
Is refreshed by the dews of sweet amity, pity's cool rain.
Not so with the flames Hell has kindled for unassoiled sin,
As soon as God's mercy would quench them, Love, weeping, lights them again.

THE ARGUMENT

Why, then, if love is all there is need to give,
All love be thine.
Thine the bright wonder of this life I live,
Its doubt's dark broodings mine.

Serene that marvellous waste of crystal sky,
And that gaunt crook-backed tree!
Hush! breathes the wind invisibly rippling by,
Hush! to the wild bird's cry . . .

Yet even as mind vowed no more to grieve,
Heart answered with a sigh.

THE SNOWDROP

Now—now, as low I stooped, thought I,
I will see what this snowdrop *is*;
So shall I put much argument by,
And solve a lifetime's mysteries.

A northern wind had frozen the grass;
Its blades were hoar with crystal rime,
Aglint like light-dissecting glass
At beam of morning-prime.

From hidden bulb the flower reared up
Its angled, slender, cold, dark stem,
Whence dangled an inverted cup
For tri-leaved diadem.

Beneath these ice-pure sepals lay
A triplet of green-pencilled snow,
Which in the chill-aired gloom of day
Stirred softly to and fro.

Mind fixed, but else made vacant, I,
Lost to my body, called my soul

To don that frail solemnity,
Its inmost self my goal.

And though in vain—no mortal mind
Across that threshold yet hath fared!—
In this collusion I divined
Some consciousness we shared.

Strange roads—while suns, a myriad, set—
Had led us through infinity;
And where they crossed, there then had met
Not two of us, but three.

'UNHEARD MELODIES'

A minstrel came singing in the way;
And the children,
Nothing saying,
Gathered round him,
From their playing,
In a bower of the shadowy may.

He stood in a loop of the green;
And his fingers
On the wires
Feigned their heart's deep,
Hidden desires
For a country that never was seen.

Like moonbeams in forests of trees,
Like brook water
Dropping sweetness,
Like the wild hare
In her fleetness,
Like the wings of the honey-sucking bees;

He drew each pure heart with his skill;
With his beauty,

And his azure,
And his topaz,
Gold for pleasure,
And his locks wet with dew of April.

Time sped; and night's shadows grew deep,
Came owl-hoot
From the thicket,
And the shrill note
Of the cricket
Called the children to silence and sleep. . . .

Strange, strange! though the minstrel is gone,
Yet that hawthorn
Fair and lonely
Stoops mutely
Waiting only
Till the clamour of noonday is done—

Until, in the faint skies of eve,
Far and sweetly,
Like a river,
Silver wires seem
Throbbing ever
As if echo in sorrow would grieve

In ears dulled with wrath and rebuke;
And like snowdrops
After winter,
Tired feet pause there,
And then enter
That bower by the midsummer brook.

O minstrel, keep thy tryst, sound thine airs
In a heart that
Oft forgets thee,
Scorns, reviles thee,
Tires, and frets thee
With the burden of silence it bears.

SHADOW

Beware!—breathes the faint evening wind?
Omen!—sighs dayspring's innocent air?
Stalks out from shadow, when drawn's the blind,
A warning Nothing, to shake the mind
And touch the soul with care?—
At midnight on thy stair?

Lurks there in every rose's sweet
A murderous whisper, *Fade must I?*
Mutters the vagrant in the street,
Edging his way with anxious feet—
Thou too art hastening by.
Drones on the carrion fly?

Oh, climb thou down from fool's disdain;
Stoop thy cold lips to rag and sore;
Kiss the gaunt cheek while yet remains
Life's blood in it. Ay, hearken; again!—
Thou art the thief, the murderer,
The outcast at thy door.

THE 'SATIRE'

The dying man on his pillow
Turned slowly his head.
'Five years on my Satire on Man
I spent,' he said.
'But, lying alone, I have mused
On myself, of late!'

Smiling, he nodded; and glanced
At the ash in the grate.

A ROSE IN CANDLELIGHT

The oil in wild Aladdin's lamp
  A witching radiance shed;
But when its Genie absent was
  It languished, dull and dead.

Lo, now, the light that bathes this rose,
That wondrous red its cheek to give!
It breathes, 'We, too, a secret share;
Fleeting we are, however fair;
And only representative.'

AT EASE

Most wounds can Time repair;
    But some are mortal—these:
For a broken heart there is no balm,
    No cure for a heart at ease—

At ease, but cold as stone,
    Though the intellect spin on,
And the feat and practised face may show
    Nought of the life that is gone;

    But smiles, as by habit taught;
    And sighs, as by custom led;
And the soul within is safe from damnation,
    Since it is dead.

EUPHRASY

Hope, wreathed with roses,
Led sand-blind Despair
To a clear babbling wellspring
And laved his eyes there—

Dark with long brooding
In dungeon-like keep—
Hope laved his eyes,
And he fell fast asleep.

He fell fast asleep
By the willows green-grey,
While the child on his pipes
Piped twilight away.
So that when he awoke
The skies were outspread
With a powder of stars
Strewn in myriads o'erhead.

And Despair lifted up
His gaunt cavernous face;
He said, 'I see Suns
Like wild beacons, in space;
I cannot endure
The blaze, dazzle, flare!'
But the child—he saw only
Faint stars glinting there.

And he flung back his head
With laughter at sight
Of that lantern-jawed face
Dazed with fear at the Night.
And he counselled Despair
Some sly shift to devise
Lest daybreak brought blindness—
Again—to his eyes.

And he his young brows
Sprinkled cold in the brook
For the magic of starshine
Which them had forsook.

THE STRATAGEM

Here's the cave where Sorrow dwells
Weeping in his courts of yew!
Foot then lightly in these dells,
Let not plash one drop of dew;
Bring your chains of pimpernels,
Bring your silvery honeydew.

Lay your nets deliciously,
Set the bait in that sweet beam—
One grey tear to lure him by
When he wakens from his dream,
And the breath of a faint sigh,
That shall ev'n less be than seem.

Hide you, hide you, not a note,
From the little birds you are!
Let not the least laughter float
Near or far, near or far!
See he wakens! scare him not—
Wild with weeping as a star.

Hie away, ah, hie away!
Woe is all! see, how the sun
Ruddies through his filmy grey,
Turns to light the dreaming one—
Mist and dew of a Spring day
Trembling a night-nothing on.

Fold your nets and mew your bait!
Come, sweet spirits, how shall we
Watch, and never ending, wait
For a wraith of transiency?
Fly ere yet the day grow late,
Else we too grow shadowy!

HOMESICK

O homesick, brood no more!
Lovely that sky; haunted the wandering wind;
Strange the dark breakers beating on the shore
That never rest, nor any respite find,
Yet ever call to the lone ghost in thee,
'Where is thy peace, where thy tranquillity?'

Only a wasting fire
Is this remembrance, cheating day and night
With vain and unassuageable desire,
And fleeting phantom pictures of delight.
And yet, O sleep—friend of my body—be
Friend to the soul also that thirsts for thee!

NIGHT

That shining moon—watched by that one faint star:
Sure now am I, beyond the fear of change,
The lovely in life is the familiar,
And only the lovelier for continuing strange.

A DREAM

Idle I sat—my book upon my knee,
The Tyro's Outline of Biology.
Drowsy the hour: and wits began to roam
Far, far from gene, as far from chromosome.
Sweet sleep stole over me. . . .
A valley in Spring!—
Wherein a river of water crystal clear
In rarer beauty imaged all things near—
Green grass, and leaf; lithe leopard, swift gazelle—
Gihon? Euphrates? No, I could not tell,
But knew it was Eden by the asphodel,
The painted birds, the songs I heard them sing.

There, where heaven's sunbeams with earth's shade inwove—
This side a slumber-solemn cedar grove,
A clear green twilight underneath a tree,
(Of Life? Of Knowledge? it was strange to me,)
Two mortals sat: a sage, dome-headed, grey,
Who looked a child, albeit in age astray—
Talking, it seemed, his very heart away;
And one even lovelier than woods in May.

She, as if poesy haunted all he said—
Eyes blue as chicory flower, and braided head—
Showed silent as snow against the tender grass,
For naked she as Aphrodite was.
And, at her shoulder, mid its coils near by,
A subtle Serpent couched, with lidless eye,
Which, its tongue flickering, else motionlessly,
Raised its rune-blazoned head, and gazed at me. . .

Whereat, although it harmless seemed, I woke;
My dream-cleansed eyes now fixed upon my book;
Nor could by any stealth I entry win
Into that paradisal scene again—
Fruit so much sweeter to a childish love
Than any knowledge I had vestige of.

QUIET

Mutely the mole toils on;
The worm in silk cocoon
Stealthy as spider spins,
As glides the moon.
But listen where envy peers 'neath the half-closed lid;
Where peeping vanity lurks; where pride lies hid;
And peace beyond telling share with the light-stilled eye,
When nought but an image of the loved one's nigh.

A PRAYER

When with day's woes night haunts wake-weary eyes,
How deep a blessing from the heart may rise
On the happy, the beautiful, the good, the wise!

The poor, the outcast, knave, child, stranger, fool
Need no commending to the merciful;
But, in a world grieved, ugly, wicked, or dull,

Who could the starry influences surmise—
What praises ardent enough could prayer devise
For the happy, the beautiful, the good the wise?

N

THE BIRTHNIGHT: TO F.

Dearest, it was a night
That in its darkness rocked Orion's stars;
A sighing wind ran faintly white
Along the willows, and the cedar boughs
Laid their wide hands in stealthy peace across
The starry silence of their antique moss:
No sound save rushing air
Cold, yet all sweet with Spring,
And in thy mother's arms, couched weeping there,
    Thou, lovely thing.

FOREBODING

Thou canst not see him standing by—
    Time—with a poppied hand
Stealing thy youth's simplicity,
Even as falls unceasingly
    His waning sand.

He'll pluck thy childish roses, as
    Summer from her bush
Strips all the loveliness that was;
Even to the silence evening has
    Thy laughter hush.

Thy locks too faint for earthly gold,
    The meekness of thine eyes,
He will darken and dim, and to his fold
Drive, 'gainst the night, thy stainless, old
    Innocencies;

Thy simple words confuse and mar,
Thy tenderest thoughts delude,
Draw a long cloud athwart thy star,
Still with loud timbrels heaven's far
Faint interlude.

Thou canst not see; I see, dearest;
O, then, yet patient be,
Though love refuse thy heart all rest,
Though even love wax angry, lest
Love should lose *thee*!

THE UNIVERSE

I heard a little child beneath the stars
Talk as he ran along
To some sweet riddle in his mind that seemed
A-tiptoe into song.

In his dark eyes lay a wild universe,—
Wild forests, peaks, and crests;
Angels and fairies, giants, wolves and he
Were that world's only guests.

Elsewhere was home and mother, his warm bed:—
Now, only God alone
Could, armed with all His power and wisdom, make
Earths richer than his own.

O Man!—thy dreams, thy passions, hopes, desires!—
He in his pity keep
A homely bed where love may lull a child's
Fond Universe asleep!

THE MARKET-PLACE

My mind is like a clamorous market-place.
  All day in wind, rain, sun, its babel wells;
  Voice answering to voice in tumult swells.
Chaffering and laughing, pushing for a place,
My thoughts haste on, gay, strange, poor, simple, base;
  This one buys dust, and that a bauble sells:
  But none to any scrutiny hints or tells
The haunting secrets hidden in each sad face.

The clamour quietens when the dark draws near;
  Strange looms the earth in twilight of the West,
Lonely with one sweet star serene and clear,
  Dwelling, when all this place is hushed to rest,
  On vacant stall, gold, refuse, worst and best,
Abandoned utterly in haste and fear.

ANATOMY

By chance my fingers, resting on my face,
  Stayed suddenly where in its orbit shone
  The lamp of all things beautiful; then on,
Following more heedfully, did softly trace
Each arch and prominence and hollow place
  That shall revealed be when all else is gone—
  Warmth, colour, roundness—to oblivion,
And nothing left but darkness and disgrace.

Life like a moment passed seemed then to be;
  A transient dream this raiment that it wore;
While spelled my hand out its mortality,
  Made certain all that had seemed doubt before:
Proved—O how vaguely, yet how lucidly!—
  How much death does: and yet can do no more.

REVERIE

Bring not bright candles, for his eyes
  In twilight have sweet company;
Bring not bright candles, else they fly—
  His phantoms fly—
Gazing aggrieved on thee!

Bring not bright candles, startle not
  The phantoms of a vacant room,
Flocking above a child that dreams—
  Deep, deep in dreams,—
Hid, in the gathering gloom!

Bring not bright candles to those eyes
  That between earth and stars descry,
Lovelier for the shadows there,
  Children of air,
Palaces in the sky!

THE MASSACRE

The shadow of a poplar tree
  Lay in that lake of sun,
As I with my little sword went in—
  Against a thousand, one.

Haughty, and infinitely armed,
  Insolent in their wrath,
Plumed high with purple plumes they held
  The narrow meadow path.

The air was sultry; all was still;
  The sun like flashing glass;
And snip-snap my light-whispering steel
  In arcs of light did pass.

Lightly and dull fell each proud head,
  Spiked keen without avail,

Till swam my uncontented blade
With ichor green and pale.

And silence fell: the rushing sun
Stood still in paths of heat,
Gazing in waves of horror on
The dead about my feet.

Never a whir of wing, no bee
Stirred o'er the shameful slain;
Nought but a thirsty wasp crept in
Stooped, and came out again.

The very air trembled in fear;
Eclipsing shadow seemed
Rising in crimson waves of gloom—
On one who dreamed.

ECHO

'Who called?' I said, and the words
Through the whispering glades,
Hither, thither, baffled the birds—
'Who called? Who called?'

The leafy boughs on high
Hissed in the sun;
The dark air carried my cry
Faintingly on:

Eyes in the green, in the shade,
In the motionless brake,
Voices that said what I said,
For mockery's sake:

'Who cares?' I bawled through my tears;
The wind fell low:
In the silence, 'Who cares? Who cares?'
Wailed to and fro.

FEAR

I know where lurk
The eyes of Fear;
I, I alone,
Where shadowy-clear,
Watching for me,
Lurks Fear.

'Tis ever still
And dark, despite
All singing and
All candlelight,
'Tis ever cold,
And night.

He touches me;
Says quietly,
'Stir not, nor whisper,
I am nigh;
Walk noiseless on,
I am by!'

He drives me
As a dog a sheep;
Like a cold stone
I cannot weep.
He lifts me,
Hot from sleep,

In marble hands
To where on high
The jewelled horror
Of his eye
Dares me to struggle
Or cry.

No breast wherein
To chase away
That watchful shape!
Vain, vain to say,
'Haunt not with night
The day!'

THE MERMAIDS

Sand, sand; hills of sand;
And the wind where nothing is
Green and sweet of the land;
No grass, no trees,
No bird, no butterfly,
But hills, hills of sand,
And a burning sky.

Sea, sea; mounds of the sea,
Hollow, and dark, and blue,
Flashing incessantly
The whole sea through;
No flower, no jutting root,
Only the floor of the sea,
With foam afloat.

Blow, blow, winding shells;
And the watery fish,
Deaf to the hidden bells,
In the waters plash;
No streaming gold, no eyes,
Watching along the waves,
But far-blown shells, faint bells,
From the darkling caves.

MYSELF

There is a garden, grey
  With mists of autumntide;
Under the giant boughs,
  Stretched green on every side,

Along the lonely paths,
  A little child like me,
With face, with hands, like mine,
  Plays ever silently;

On, on, quite silently,
  When I am there alone,
Turns not his head; lifts not his eyes;
  Heeds not as he plays on.

After the birds are flown
  From singing in the trees,
When all is grey, all silent,
  Voices, and winds, and bees;

And I am there alone:
  Forlornly, silently,
Plays in the evening garden
  Myself with me.

AUTUMN

There is a wind where the rose was;
Cold rain where sweet grass was;
  And clouds like sheep
  Stream o'er the steep
Grey skies where the lark was.

Nought gold where your hair was;
Nought warm where your hand was;
  But phantom, forlorn,
  Beneath the thorn,
Your ghost where your face was.

Sad winds where your voice was;
Tears, tears where my heart was;
And ever with me,
Child, ever with me,
Silence where hope was.

WINTER

Green Mistletoe!
Oh, I remember now
A dell of snow,
Frost on the bough;
None there but I:
Snow, snow, and a wintry sky.

None there but I,
And footprints one by one,
Zigzaggedly,
Where I had run;
Where shrill and powdery
A robin sat in the tree.

And he whistled sweet;
And I in the crusted snow
With snow-clubbed feet
Jigged to and fro,
Till, from the day,
The rose-light ebbed away.

And the robin flew
Into the air, the air,
The white mist through;
And small and rare
The night-frost fell
Into the calm and misty dell.

And the dusk gathered low,
And the silver moon and stars

On the frozen snow
Drew taper bars,
Kindled winking fires
In the hooded briers.

And the sprawling Bear
Growled deep in the sky;
And Orion's hair
Streamed sparkling by:
But the North sighed low:
'*Snow, snow, more snow!*'

TO MY MOTHER

Thine is my all, how little when 'tis told
Beside thy gold!
Thine the first peace, and mine the livelong strife;
Thine the clear dawn, and mine the night of life;
Thine the unstained belief,
Darkened in grief.

Scarce even a flower but thine its beauty and name,
Dimmed, yet the same;
Never in twilight comes the moon to me,
Stealing thro' those far woods, but tells of thee,
Falls, dear, on my wild heart,
And takes thy part.

Thou art the child, and I—how steeped in age!
A blotted page
From that clear, little book life's taken away:
How could I read it, dear, so dark the day?
Be it all memory
'Twixt thee and me!

MARTHA

'Once . . . once upon a time . . .'
  Over and over again,
Martha would tell us her stories,
  In the hazel glen.

Hers were those clear grey eyes
  You watch, and the story seems
Told by their beautifulness
  Tranquil as dreams.

She'd sit with her two slim hands
  Clasped round her bended knees;
While we on our elbows lolled,
  And stared at ease.

Her voice and her narrow chin,
  Her grave small lovely head,
Seemed half the meaning
  Of the words she said.

'Once . . . once upon a time . . .'
  Like a dream you dream in the night,
Fairies and gnomes stole out
  In the leaf-green light.

And her beauty far away
  Would fade, as her voice ran on,
Till hazel and summer sun
  And all were gone:

All fordone and forgot;
  And like clouds in the height of the sky,
Our hearts stood still in the hush
  Of an age gone by.

RACHEL

Rachel sings sweet—
  Oh, yes, at night,
Her pale face bent
  In the candle-light,
Her slim hands touch
  The answering keys,
And she sings of hope
  And of memories:
Sings to the little
  Boy that stands
Watching those slim,
  Light, heedful hands.
He looks in her face;
  Her dark eyes seem
Dark with a beautiful
  Distant dream;
And still she plays,
  Sings tenderly
To him of hope,
  And of memory.

EXILE

Had the gods loved me I had lain
  Where darnel is, and thorn,
And the wild night-bird's nightlong strain
  Trembles in boughs forlorn.

Nay, but they loved me not; and I
  Must needs a stranger be,
Whose every exiled day gone by
  Aches with their memory.

MUSIC UNHEARD

Sweet sounds, begone—
  Whose music on my ear
Stirs foolish discontent
  Of lingering here;
When, if I crossed
  The crystal verge of death,
Him I should see
  Who these sounds murmureth.

Sweet sounds, begone—
  Ask not my heart to break
Its bond of bravery for
  Sweet quiet's sake;
Lure not my feet
  To leave the path they must
Tread on, unfaltering,
  Till I sleep in dust.

Sweet sounds, begone!
  Though silence brings apace
Deadly disquiet
  Of this homeless place;
And all I love
  In beauty cries to me,
'We but vain shadows
  And reflections be.'

THE DREAMER

O thou who giving helm and sword,
  Gav'st too the rusting rain,
And starry dark's all tender dews
    To blunt and stain:

Out of the battle I am sped,
  Unharmed, yet stricken sore;
A living shape amid whispering shades
    On Lethe's shore.

No trophy in my hands I bring,
To this sad, sighing stream,
The neighings and the trumps and cries
Were but a dream.

Traitor to life, of life betrayed
O, of thy mercy deep,
A dream my all, the all I ask
Is sleep.

FOR ALL THE GRIEF

For all the grief I have given with words
May now a few clear flowers blow,
In the dust, and the heat, and the silence of birds,
Where the friendless go.

For the thing unsaid that heart asked of me
Be a dark, cool water calling—calling
To the footsore, benighted, solitary,
When the shadows are falling.

O, be beauty for all my blindness,
A moon in the air where the weary wend,
And dews burdened with loving-kindness
In the dark of the end.

THE IMP WITHIN

'Rouse now, my dullard, and thy wits awake;
'Tis first of the morning. And I bid thee make—
No, not a vow; we have munched our fill of these
From crock of bone-dry crusts and mouse-gnawn cheese—
Nay, just one whisper in that long, long ear—
Awake; rejoice. Another Day is here!—

'A virgin wilderness, which, hour by hour,
Mere happy idleness shall bring to flower.
Barren and arid though its sands now seem,
Wherein oasis becks not, shines no stream,
Yet wake—and lo, 'tis lovelier than a dream!

'Plunge on, thy every footprint shall make fair
Its thirsty waste; and thy forecome despair
Undarken into sweet birds in the air,
Whose coursing wings and love-crazed summoning cries
Into infinity shall attract thine eyes.

'No . . .? Well, lest promise in performance faint,
A less inviting prospect will I paint.
I bid thee adjure thy Yesterday, and say:
"As *thou* wast, Enemy, so be To-day!—
Immure me in the same close narrow room;
Be hated toil the lamp to light its gloom;
Make stubborn my pen; sift dust into my ink;
Forbid mine eyes to see, my brain to think.
Scare off the words whereon the mind is set.
Make memory the power to forget.
Constrain imagination; bind its wing;
Forbid the unseen Enchantresses to sing.
Ay, do thy worst!"
'Vexed Spectre, prythee smile.
Even though that yesterday was bleak and sour,
Art thou a slave beneath its thong to cower?
Thou hast survived! And hither am I—again,
Kindling with mockery thy o'erlaboured brain.
Though scant the moments be wherein we meet,
Think, what dark months would even one make sweet!

'Thy pen? Thy paper? Ah, my dear, be true.
Come quick To-morrow. Until then, Adieu.'

THE SPECTRE

In cloudy quiet of the day,
While thrush and robin perched mute on spray,
A spectre by the window sat,
Brooding thereat.

He marked the greenness of the Spring,
Daffodil blowing, bird a-wing—
Yet dark the house the years had made
Within that Shade.

Blinded the rooms wherein no foot falls.
Faded the portraits on the walls.
Reverberating, shakes the air
A river there.

Coursing in flood, its infinite roars;
From pit to pit its water pours;
And he, with countenance unmoved,
Hears cry:—'Beloved,

'Oh, ere the day be utterly spent,
Return, return, from banishment.
The night thick-gathers. Weep a prayer
For the true and fair!'

THE VOICE

'We are not often alone, we two,'
Mused a secret voice in my ear,
As the dying hues of afternoon
Lapsed into evening drear.

A withered leaf, wafted on in the street,
Like a wayless spectre, sighed;
Aslant on the roof-tops a sickly moon
Did mutely abide.

Yet waste though the shallowing day might seem,
And fainter than hope its rose,
Strangely that speech in my thoughts welled on;
As water in-flows:

Like remembered words once heard in a room
Wherein death kept far-away tryst;
'Not often alone, we two; but thou,
How sorely missed!'

WHO'S THAT?

Who's that? Who's that? . . .
Oh, only a leaf on the stone;
And the sigh of the air in the fire.
Yet it seemed, as I sat,
Came company—not my own;
Stood there, with ardent gaze over dark, bowed shoulder thrown,
Till the dwindling flames leaped higher,
And showed fantasy flown.

Yet, though the cheat is clear—
From transient illusion grown;
In the vague of my mind those eyes
Still haunt me. One stands so near
I could take his hand, and be gone:—
No more in this house of dreams to sojourn aloof, alone:
Could sigh, with full heart, and arise,
And choke, 'Lead on!'

AWAKE!

Why hath the rose faded and fallen, yet these eyes have not seen?
Why hath the bird sung shrill in the tree—and this mind deaf and cold?
Why have the rains of summer veiled her flowers with their sheen
And this black heart untold?

Here is calm Autumn now, the woodlands quake,
And, where this splendour of death lies under the tread,
The spectre of frost will stalk, and a silence make,
And snow's white shroud be spread.

O self! O self! Wake from thy common sleep!
Fling off the destroyer's net. He hath blinded and bound thee.
In nakedness sit; pierce thy stagnation, and weep;
Or corrupt in thy grave—all Heaven around thee.

THE SPIRIT OF AIR

Coral and clear emerald,
And amber from the sea,
Lilac-coloured amethyst,
Chalcedony;
The lovely Spirit of Air
Floats on a cloud and doth ride,
Clad in the beauties of earth
Like a bride.

So doth she haunt me; and words
Tell but a tithe of the tale.
Sings all the sweetness of Spring
Even in the nightingale?
Nay, but with echoes she cries
Of the valley of love;
Dews on the thorns at her feet,
And darkness above.

THE SON OF MELANCHOLY

Unto blest Melancholy's house one happy day
I took my way:
Into a chamber was shown, whence could be seen
Her flowerless garden, dyed with sunlit green
Of myrtle, box, and bay.

Cool were its walls, shade-mottled, green and gold.
In heavy fold
Hung antique tapestries, from whose fruit and flower
Light had the bright hues stolen, hour by hour,
And time worn thin and old.

Silence, as of a virginal laid aside,
Did there abide.
But not for voice or music was I fain,
Only to see a long-loved face again—
For her sole company sighed.

And while I waited, giving memory praise,
My musing gaze
Lit on the one sole picture in the room,
Which hung, as if in hiding, in the gloom
From evening's stealing rays.

Framed in fast-fading gilt, a child gazed there,
Lovely and fair;
A face whose happiness was like sunlight spent
On some poor desolate soul in banishment,
Mutely his grief to share.

Long, long I stood in trance of that glad face,
Striving to trace
The semblance that, disquieting, it bore
To one whom memory could not restore,
Nor fix in time and space.

Sunk deep in brooding thus, a voice I heard
Whisper its word:
I turned—and, stooping in the threshold, stood
She—the dark mistress of my solitude,
Who smiled, nor stirred.

Her ghost gazed darkly from her pondering eyes
Charged with surmise;
Challenging mine, between mockery and fear,
She breathed her greeting, '*Thou*, my only dear!
Wherefore such heavy sighs?'

'But this?' One instant lids her scrutiny veiled;
Her wan cheek paled.
'This child?' I asked. 'Its picture brings to mind
Remembrance faint and far, past thought to find,
And yet by time unstaled.'

Smiling, aloof, she turned her narrow head,
'Make thou my face thy glass,' she cried and said.
'What wouldst thou see therein—thine own, or mine?
O foolish one, what wonder thou didst pine?

'Long thou hast loved me; yet hast absent been.
See now: Dark night hath pressed an entrance in.
Jealous! thou dear? Nay, come; by taper's beam
Share thou this pictured Joy with me, though only a dream.'

THE CATECHISM

'Hast thou then nought wiser to bring
Than worn-out songs of moon and of rose?'
'Cracked my voice, and broken my wing,
God knows.'

'Tell'st thou no truth of the life that *is*;
Seek'st thou from heaven no pitying sign?'
'Ask thine own heart these mysteries,
Not mine.'

'Where then the faith thou hast brought to seed?
Where the sure hope thy soul would feign?'
'Never ebbed sweetness—even out of a weed—
In vain.'

'Fool. The night comes. . . . 'Tis late. Arise.
Cold lap the waters of Jordan stream.'
'Deep be their flood, and tranquil thine eyes
With a dream.'

FUTILITY

Sink, thou strange heart, unto thy rest.
Pine now no more, to pine in vain.
Doth not the moon on heaven's breast
Call the floods home again?

Doth not the summer faint at last?
Do not her restless rivers flow
When that her transient day is past
To hide them in ice and snow?

All this—thy world—an end shall make;
Planet to sun return again;
The universe, to sleep from wake,
In a last peace remain.

Alas, the futility of care
That, spinning thought to thought, doth weave
An idle argument on the air
We love not, nor believe.

COMFORT

As I mused by the hearthside,
Puss said to me:
'There burns the Fire, man,
And here sit we.

'Four Walls around us
Against the cold air;
And the latchet drawn close
To the draughty Stair.

'A Roof o'er our heads
Star-proof, moon immune,
And a wind in the chimney
To wail us a tune.

'What Felicity!' miaowed he,
'Where none may intrude;
Just Man and Beast—met
In this Solitude!

'Dear God, what security,
Comfort and bliss!
And to think, too, what ages
Have brought us to this!

'You in your sheep's-wool coat,
Buttons of bone,
And me in my fur-about
On the warm hearthstone.'

I SIT ALONE

I sit alone,
And clear thoughts move in me,
Pictures, now near, now far,
Of transient fantasy.
Happy I am, at peace
In my own company.

Yet life is a dread thing, too,
Dark with horror and fear.
Beauty's fingers grow cold,
Sad cries I hear,
Death with a stony gaze
Is ever near.

Lost in myself I hide
From the cold unknown:
Lost, like a world cast forth
Into space star-sown:
And the songs of the morning are stilled,
And delight in them flown.

So even the tender and dear
Like phantoms through memory stray—
Creations of sweet desire,
That faith can alone bid stay:
They cast off the cloak of the real
And vanish away.

Only love can redeem
This truth, that delight;
Bring morning to blossom again
Out of plague-ridden night;
Restore to the lost the found,
To the blinded, sight.

FORESTS

Turn, now, tired mind, unto your rest,
Within your secret chamber lie,
Doors shut, and windows curtained, lest
Footfall or moonbeam, stealing by,
Wake you, or night-wind sigh.

Now, Self, we are at peace—we twain;
The house is silent, except that—hark!
Against its walls wells out again
That rapture in the empty dark;
Where, softly beaming, spark by spark,

The glow-worms stud the leaves with light;
And unseen flowers, refreshed with dew—
Jasmine, convolvulus, glimmering white,
The air with their still life endue,
And sweeten night for me and you.

Be mute all speech; and not of love
Talk we, nor call on hope, but be—
Calm as the constant stars above—
The friends of fragile memory,
Shared only now by you and me.

Thus hidden, thus silent, while the hours
From gloom to gloom their wings beat on,
Shall not a moment's peace be ours,
Till, faint with day, the East is wan,
And terrors of the dark are gone?

Nay—in the forest of the mind
Lurk beasts as fierce as those that tread
Earth's rock-strown wilds, to night resigned,
There stars of heaven no radiance shed—
Bleak-eyed Remorse, Despair becowled in lead.

With dawn these ravening shapes will go—
Though One at watch will still remain:
Till knell the sunset hour, and lo!
The listening soul once more will know
Death and his pack are hot afield again.

RECONCILIATION

Leave April now, and autumn having,
Leave hope to fade, and darkness braving,
Take thine own soul
Companion,
And journey on.

The cresset fire of noon is waning,
Shadow the lonelier hills is staining;
Watch thou the West
Whence pale shall shine
Hesper divine!

Beauty, what is it but love's vision?
Earth's fame, the soul's supreme derision?
O ardent dust,
Turn to thy grave
And quiet have!

THE GLANCE

Dearest one, daughter! at glance of your brow-shaded eye,
Fixed gravely in all its young scrutiny dark on my own,
Lone seemed my soul as this earth was itself 'neath the sky,
When at word of creation the trumps of the angels were blown.

They rang to the verge of the universe, solemn and deep,
Clanging untellable joy to the heavens above,
And, at core of that clangour, in silence profounder than sleep,
Adam and Eve lay adream in their Eden of love.

But you, in your bird-eyed wonder, gazed steadily on,
Knowing naught of the tempest so stirred. I stooped down my head,
And, shutting my eyes to a prayer whereof words there are none,
Could but clasp your cold hand in my own and was dumb as the dead.

HOW BLIND!

How blind 'twas to be harsh, I know—
And to be harsh to *thee*;
To let one hour in anger go,
And unforgiven be!

And now—O idiot tongue to dart
That venomed fang, nor heed
Not thine but mine the stricken heart
Shall never cease to bleed.

THE ROUND

I watched, upon a vase's rim,
An earwig—strayed from honeyed cell—
Circling a track once strange to him,
But now known far too well.

With vexed antennae, searching space,
And giddy grope to left and right,
On—and still on—he pressed apace,
Out of, and into, sight.

In circumambulation drear,
He neither wavered, paused nor stayed;
But now kind Providence drew near—
A slip of wood I laid

Across his track. He scaled its edge:
And soon was safely restored to where
A sappy, dew-bright, flowering hedge
Of dahlias greened the air.

Ay, and as apt may be my fate! . . .
Smiling, I turned to work again:
But shivered, where in shade I sate,
And idle did remain.

THE OMEN

Far overhead—the glass set fair—
I heard a raven in the air;
'Twixt roof and stars it fanning went,
And croaked in sudden dreariment.

Over the pages of my book
I, listening, cast a sidelong look.
Curtained the window; shut the door;
I turned me to my book once more;
But in that quiet strove in vain
To win its pleasure back again.

WHICH WAY?

Wander, spirit?—*I!*
Who do not even know
Which way I'd go:
Yet sigh:

Who cannot even, first,
What far-off living well
I pine for, tell:
Yet thirst!

Unfailing joys I share;
No hour, however fleet,
But brings its sweet
And fair:

And yet—scoff not!—day gone,
Some silly ghost creeps back,
'What do you lack?'
To groan.

MIST

Sometimes in moods of gloom—like mist
Enswathing hill and wood—
A miracle of sunshine breaks
Into my solitude.

In scattered splendour burns the dew;
Still as in dream, the trees
Their vaulted branches echo make
To the birds' ecstasies.

What secret influence was this
Made all dark brooding vain?
Has then the mind no inward sun?—
The mists cloud down again:

Stealthily drape the distant heights,
Blot out the songless tree:
Into cold silence flit the thoughts
That sang to me.

THE FLEETING

The late wind failed; high on the hill
The pine's resounding boughs were still:
Those wondrous airs that space had lent
To wail earth's night-long banishment
From heat and light and song of day
In a last sighing died away.

Alone in the muteness, lost and small,
I watched from far-off Leo fall
An ebbing trail of silvery dust,
And fade to naught; while, near and far,
Glittered in quiet star to star;
And dreamed, in midnight's dim immense,
Heaven's universal innocence.

O transient heart that yet can raise
To the unseen its pang of praise,
And from the founts in play above
Be freshed with that sweet love!

BREAK OF MORNING

Sound the invisible trumps. In circuit vast
The passive earth, like scene in dream, is set.
The small birds flit and sing, their dark hours past,
And their green sojournings with dewdrops wet.

With giant boughs outspread, the oaks on high
Brood on in slumbrous quiet in the air.
Sole in remote inane of vacant sky
Paling Arcturus sparkles wildly fair.

Sound the invisible trumps. The waters weep.
  A stealing wind breathes in the meads, is gone.
Into their earthen burrows the wild things creep;
  Cockcrow to thinning cockcrow echoes on.

Avert thine eyes, sleep-ridden face! Nor scan
  Those seraph hosts that in divine array
Girdle the mortal-masked empyrean:
  Their sovereign beauty is this break of day.

Theirs is the music men call silence here;
  What wonder grief distorts thy burning eyes?
Turn to thy pillow again—in love and fear;
  Not thine to see the Son of Morning rise.

A SUNDAY

A child in the Sabbath peace, there—
Down by the full-bosomed river;
Sun on the tide-way, flutter of wind,
Water-cluck,—*Ever . . . for ever . . .*

Time itself seemed to cease there—
The domed, hushed city behind me;
Home how distant! The morrow would come—
But here, no trouble could find me.

A respite, a solacing, deep as the sea,
Was mine. Will it come again? . . . Never? . . .
Shut in the past is that Sabbath peace, there—
Down by the full-bosomed river.

A POT OF MUSK

A glance—and instantly the small meek flower
Whispered of what it had to childhood meant;
But kept the angel secret of that far hour
  Ere it had lost its scent.

BROTHER AND SISTER

A turn of head, that searching light,
And—was it fancy?—a faint sigh:
I know not what; there leapt the thought,
We are old, now—she and I.

Old, though those eager clear blue eyes,
And lines of laughter along the cheek,
Far less of time than time's despite
To one who loves her speak. . . .

Besides, those pale and smiling lips,
That once with beauty were content,
Now wisdom too have learned; and that
No clock can circumvent. . . .

Nor is this world of ours a toy
That woe should darken when bed-time nears;
Still memory-sweet its old decoy,
And—well, what use in tears? . . .

So limped the brittle argument;
Yet—had I Prospero's wizardry,
She should at once have back her youth,
Whatever chanced to me.

ABSALOM

Vain, proud, rebellious Prince, thy treacherous hair,
Though thirty centuries have come and gone,
Still in that bitter oak doth thee ensnare;
Rings on that broken-hearted, *Son, my son!* . . .

And though, with childhood's tragic gaze, I see
Thee—idol of Israel—helpless in the tree,
Thy dying eyes turned darkened from the Sun;
Yet, of all faces in far memory's shrine—
Paris, Adonis, pale Endymion—
The loveliest still is thine.

IN A LIBRARY

Would—would that there were
A book on that shelf
To teach an old man
To teach himself!—

The joy of some scribe,
Brush in service to quill,
Who, with bird, flower, landscape,
Emblem and vision,
Loved his margins to fill.

Then might I sit,
By true learning beguiled,
Far into the night
Even with self reconciled,
Retrieving the wisdom
I lost, when a child.

A CHILD ASLEEP

Angel of Words, in vain I have striven with thee,
Nor plead a lifetime's love and loyalty;
Only, with envy, bid thee watch this face,
That says so much, so flawlessly,
And in how small a space!

THE BRIDGE

With noble and strange devices Man hath spanned
River and torrent, raging in flood beneath;
But one more subtle than he ever planned
Will exhaust my last faint breath:
A bridge, now nearing, I shall walk alone—

One pier on earth, the other in the unknown:
And there, a viewless wraith—
Prince of the wreckage of the centuries,
Yet still past thought's fixed scrutiny, heart's surmise,
And nought but a name, yet: Death.

MEMORY

Ah, Memory—that strange deceiver!
Who can trust her? How believe her—
While she hoards with equal care
The poor and trivial, rich and rare;
Yet flings away, as wantonly,
Grave fact and loveliest fantasy?

When I call her—need her most,
Lo, she's in hiding, or is lost!
Or, capricious as the wind,
Brings stalks—and leaves the flowers behind!
Of all existence—as I live—
She can no more than moments give.
Thousands of dew-clear dusks in Spring
Were mine, time gone, to wander in,
But of their fragrance, music, peace,
What now is left my heart to bless?
Oases in a wilderness!
Nor could her tongue tell o'er the tale
Even of one June nightingale.
And what of the strange world that teems—
Where brooding Hypnos reigns—with dreams?
Twenty years in sleep I have spent—
Horror, delight, grief, wonderment;
Through what wild wizard scenes lured on!
Where are they? . . . In oblivion.
Told she her all, 'twould reach an end
Ere nodded off the drowsiest friend!

She has, it's true, a sovereign skill
A wounded heart to salve and heal;
Can lullaby to sorrow sing;
Shed balm on grief and suffering;
And guard with unremitting care
Secrets that we alone can share.
Ay, so bewitched her amber is
'Twill keep enshrined the tiniest flies—
Instants of childhood, fresh as when
My virgin sense perceived them then—
Daisy or rainbow, a look, a kiss,
As safe as if Eternity's;
And can, with probe as keen, restore
Some fear, or woe, when I was four.
Fleeter than Nereid, plummet-deep,
Enticed by some long-sunken ship,
She, siren-wise, laughs out to see
The treasure she retrieves for me—
Gold foundered when I was a boy,
Now cleansed by Time from all alloy.
And think what priceless boons I owe
Her whimsical punctilio!

Nothing would recognition bring
Should she forsake me. Everything
I will, or want, or plan, or say
Were past conceiving, she away.
Only her exquisite vigilance
Enables me to walk, sing, dance.
Tree and bird would name-less pine
Did she the twain refuse to entwine.
And where, sad dunce, if me she shun,
My A B C? my twice times one?
Fancy her nurseling is; and thought
Can solely in her toils be caught.
Ev'n who and where and what I am
Await her whisper to proclaim.

If only—what the infinite loss!—
I had helped her sever gold from dross!
Since now she is—for better or worse—
The relics of my Universe.
But, ah, how scant a heed she pays
To much well-meaning Conscience says!
And good intentions? Alas for them!
They are left to languish on the stem.
The mort of promises idly made—
Where now their husks, the fickle jade?
Where, too, the jilt so gaily resigned
To out-of-sight being out-of-mind?
And, Love?—I would my heart and she
Were more attuned to constancy!

Musing, she sits, at ease, in peace,
Unchanged by age or time's caprice,
And quietly cons again with me
Some well-loved book of poetry,
Her furtive finger putting by,
With a faint smile, or fainter sigh,
The withered flowers that mark a place
Once over-welled with grief or grace.
Yes, and, as though the wanton tried
Once bitter pangs to gloss, or hide,
She stills a voice fall'n harsh and hoarse
With sudden ill-concealed remorse.
I scan the sphinx-like face, and ask
What still lies hid beneath that mask?—
The sins, the woes, the perfidy—
O murderous taciturnity!
I am the *all* I have ever been,
Why gild the cage thou keep'st me in?
Sweet, sweet! she mocks me, the siren; and then
Its very bars shine bright again.

Yet, of my life, from first to last,
This wayward mistress of the Past—

Soundless foot, and tarn-dark eyes—
Keeps safe for me what most I prize.
The sage may to the Future give
Their *Now*, however fugitive;
Mine savours less of rue and myrrh
When spent, in solitude, with her;
When, kingfisher, on leafy spray,
I while the sunshine hours away
In tranquil joy—as in a dream—
Not of its fish, but of the stream;
Whose gliding waters then reflect
Serener skies, in retrospect,
And flowers, ev'n fairer to the eye
Than those of actuality.

And with what grace she has dealt with me—
What patience, insight, sorcery!
Why, every single word here writ
Was hers, till she surrendered it;
And where, without her—I? for lo,
When she is gone I too must go.

FAINT MUSIC

The meteor's arc of quiet; a voiceless rain;
The mist's mute communing with a stagnant moat;
The sigh of a flower that has neglected lain;
That bell's unuttered note:

A hidden self rebels, its slumber broken;
Love secret as crystal forms within the womb;
The heart may as faithfully beat, the vow unspoken;
All sounds to silence come.

OUT OF BOUNDS

Why covet what eye cannot see;
Or earthly longing knows?
Decoyed by cheating fantasy—
This restless ranging to and fro?

Would wildlier sing dark's nightingale
Where Hera's golden apples grow?
Would lovelier be the swallow's flight
In wastes of wild auroral night,
Wondrous with falling snow?

THE LAST CHAPTER

I am living more alone now than I did;
This life tends inward, as the body ages;
And what is left of its strange book to read
Quickens in interest with the last few pages.

Problems abound. Its authorship? A sequel?
Its hero-villain, whose ways so little mend?
The plot? still dark. The style? a shade unequal.
And what of the dénouement? And, the end?

No, no, have done! Lay the thumbed thing aside;
Forget its horrors, folly, incitements, lies;
In silence and in solitude abide,
And con what yet may bless your inward eyes.

Pace, still, for pace with you, companion goes,
Though now, through dulled and inattentive ear,
No more—as when a child's—your sick heart knows
His infinite energy and beauty near.

His, too, a World, though viewless save in glimpse;
He, too, a book of imagery bears;
And, as your halting foot beside him limps,
Mark you whose badge and livery he wears.

O CHILDISH MIND!

O childish mind!—last night to rapture won
In marvel of wild Orion; now to sink
Earthward; and by the flames of a dwarf sun
Find a like happiness in a single pink!

UNFORESEEN

Darkness had fallen. I opened the door:
And lo, a stranger in the empty room—
A marvel of moonlight upon wall and floor . . .
The quiet of mercy? Or the hush of doom?

FOREBODING

The sycamore, by the heap of dead
  Summer's last flowers that rot below,
Will suddenly in the stillness shed
  A cockled leaf from a bud-tight bough:
So ghostlike the sound that I turn my head
As if at a whisper—at something said;
  'What! And still happy? Thou!'

That is this captious phantom's way—
  Omens, monitions, hints of fate,
On a quiet, air-sweet October day
  Of beauty past estimate!
Is it age; or conscience; or mind now fey
At a world from love so far astray
  That can only falter, 'Wait'?

THE DOVE

How often, these hours, have I heard the monotonous crool of a
dove—
Voice, low, insistent, obscure, since its nest it has hid in a grove—
Flowers of the linden wherethrough the hosts of the honeybees
rove.

And I have been busily idle: no problems; nothing to prove;
No urgent foreboding; but only life's shallow habitual groove:
Then why, if I pause to listen, should the languageless note of a dove
So dark with disquietude seem? And what is it sorrowing of?

THE OLD SUMMERHOUSE

This blue-washed, old, thatched summerhouse—
Paint scaling, and fading from its walls—
How often from its hingeless door
I have watched—dead leaf, like the ghost of a mouse,
Rasping the worn brick floor—
The snows of the weir descending below,
And their thunderous waterfall.

Fall—fall: dark, garrulous rumour,
Until I could listen no more.
Could listen no more—for beauty with sorrow
Is a burden hard to be borne:
The evening light on the foam, and the swans, there;
That music, remote, forlorn.

AN INTERLUDE

A small brook gushed on stones hard by,
Waste-lorn it babbled; alone was I,
Dawn's ever-changing alchemy
Low in the eastern sky.

Ghost that I was, by dream waylaid,
Benighted, and yet unafraid,
I sat, in those brief hours, long-lost,
  And communed with the sea.

Faint, o'er its shingly murmuring,
The secret songs I had hoped to sing—
When I on earth was sojourning—
Of which poor words, alas, can bring
Only a deadened echoing
  Of what they meant to me—

Rose in my throat; and poured their dew—
A hymn of praise—my being through;
Shed peace on a mind that never knew
  Peace in that mind could be.

Only a soundless voice was I,
Yet sweeter that than man can hear
When, latticed in by moonbeams clear,
The bird of darkness to its fere
  Tells out love's mystery.

No listener there—a dream; but ne'er
Sang happier heart in heaven fair
  To lyre or psaltery. . . .

Oh, futile vanity to mourn
What the day's waking leaves forlorn!
Doth not earth's strange and lovely mean
Only, 'Come, see, O son of man,
All that you hope, the nought you can,
The glory that might have been?'

TREACHERY

She had amid her ringlets bound
Green leaves to rival their dark hue;
How could such locks with beauty bound
Dry up their dew,
Wither them through and through?

She had within her dark eyes lit
Sweet fires to burn all doubt away;
Yet did those fires, in darkness lit,
Burn but a day,
Not even till twilight stay.

She had within a dusk of words
A vow in simple splendour set;
How, in the memory of such words,
Could she forget
That vow—the soul of it?

IN VAIN

I knocked upon thy door ajar,
While yet the woods with buds were grey;
Nought but a little child I heard
Warbling at break of day.

I knocked when June had lured her rose
To mask the sharpness of its thorn;
Knocked yet again, heard only yet
Thee singing of the morn.

The frail convolvulus had wreathed
Its cup, but the faint flush of eve
Lingered upon thy Western wall;
Thou hadst no word to give.

Once yet I came; the winter stars
Above thy house wheeled wildly bright;
Footsore I stood before thy door—
Wide open into night.

THE DEATH-DREAM

Who, now, put dreams into thy slumbering mind?
Who, with bright Fear's lean taper, crossed a hand
Athwart its beam, and stooping, truth maligned,
Spake so thy spirit speech should understand,
And with a dread 'He's dead!' awaked a peal
Of frenzied bells along the vacant ways
Of thy poor earthly heart; waked thee to steal,
Like dawn distraught upon unhappy days,
To prove nought, nothing? Was it Time's large voice
Out of the inscrutable future whispered so?
Or but the horror of a little noise
Earth wakes at dead of night? Or does Love know
When his sweet wings weary and droop, and even
In sleep cries audibly a shrill remorse?
Or, haply, was it I who out of dream
Stole but a little way where shadows course,
Called back to thee across the eternal stream?

'WHERE IS THY VICTORY?'

None, none can tell where I shall be
When the unclean earth covers me;
Only in surety if thou cry
Where my perplexèd ashes lie,
Know, 'tis but death's necessity
That keeps my tongue from answering thee.

Even if no more my shadow may
Lean for a moment in thy day;
No more the whole earth lighten, as if,
Thou near, it had nought else to give:
Surely 'tis but Heaven's strategy
To prove death immortality.

Yet should I sleep—and no more dream,
Sad would the last awakening seem,
If my cold heart, with love once hot,

Had thee in sleep remembered not:
How could I wake to find that I
Had slept alone, yet easefully?

Or should in sleep glad visions come:
Sick, in an alien land, for home
Would be my eyes in their bright beam;
Awake, we know 'tis not a dream;
Asleep, some devil in the mind
Might truest thoughts with false enwind.

Life is a mockery if death
Have the least power men say it hath.
As to a hound that mewing waits,
Death opens, and shuts to, his gates;
Else even dry bones might rise and say,—
"Tis *ye* are dead and laid away.'

Innocent children out of nought
Build up a universe of thought,
And out of silence fashion Heaven:
So, dear, is this poor dying even,
Seeing thou shalt be touched, heard, seen,
Better than when dust stood between.

VAIN FINDING

Ever before my face there went
  Betwixt earth's buds and me
A beauty beyond earth's content,
  A hope—half memory:
Till in the woods one evening—
  Ah! eyes as dark as they,
Fastened on mine unwontedly,
  Grey, and dear heart, how grey!

THE SHADE

Darker than night; and, oh, much darker, she
Whose eyes in deep night darkness gaze on me.
No stars surround her; yet the moon seems hid
Afar somewhere, beneath that narrow lid.
She darkens against the darkness; and her face
Only by adding thought to thought I trace,
Limned shadowily: O dream, return once more
To gloomy Hades and the whispering shore!

BE ANGRY NOW NO MORE

Be angry now no more!
  If I have grieved thee—if
Thy kindness, mine before,
No hope may now restore:
  Only forgive, forgive!

If still resentment burns
  In thy cold breast, oh, if
No more to pity turns,
No more, once tender, yearns
  Thy love; oh, yet forgive! . . .

Ask of the winter rain
June's withered rose again:
Ask grace of the salt sea:
She will not answer thee.
God would ten times have shriven
A heart so riven;
In her cold care thou wouldst be
Still unforgiven.

WHERE?

Where is my love—
In silence and shadow she lies,
Under the April-grey calm waste of the skies;
And a bird above,
In the darkness tender and clear,
Keeps saying over and over, Love lies here!

Not that she's dead;
Only her soul is flown
Out of its last pure earthly mansion;
And cries instead
In the darkness, tender and clear,
Like the voice of a bird in the leaves, Love—
Love lies here.

THE GHOST

Peace in thy hands,
Peace in thine eyes,
Peace on thy brow;
Flower of a moment in the eternal hour
Peace with me now.

Not a wave breaks,
Not a bird calls,
My heart, like a sea,
Silent after a storm that hath died,
Sleeps within me.

All the night's dews,
All the world's leaves,
All winter's snow
Seem with their quiet to have stilled in life's dream
All sorrowing now.

MOONLIGHT

The far moon maketh lovers wise
  In her pale beauty trembling down,
Lending curved cheeks, dark lips, dark eyes,
  A strangeness not her own.
And, though they shut their lids to kiss,
  In starless darkness peace to win,
Even on that secret world from this
  Her twilight enters in.

THE QUARRY

You hunted me with all the pack,
  Too blind, too blind, to see
By no wild hope of force or greed
  Could you make sure of me.

And like a phantom through the glades,
  With tender breast aglow,
The goddess in me laughed to hear
  Your horns a-roving go.

She laughed to think no mortal ever
  By dint of mortal flesh
The very Cause that was the Hunt
  One moment could enmesh:

That though with captive limbs I lay,
  Stilled breath and vanquished eyes,
He that hunts Love with horse and hound
  Hunts out his heart and eyes.

'Step very softly, sweet Quiet-foot,
Stumble not, whisper not, smile not:
By this dark ivy stoop cheek and brow.
Still even thy heart! What seest thou? . . .'

'High-coifed, broad-browed, aged, suave yet grim,
A large flat face, eyes keenly dim,
Staring at nothing—that's me!—and yet,
With a hate one could never, no, never forget . . .'

'This is my world, my garden, my home,
Hither my father bade mother to come
And bear me out of the dark into light,
And happy I was in her tender sight.

'And then, thou frail flower, she died and went,
Forgetting my pitiless banishment,
And that Old Woman—an Aunt—she said,
Came hither, lodged, fattened, and made her bed.

'Oh, yes, thou most blessed, from Monday to Sunday,
Has lived on me, preyed on me, Mrs. Grundy:
Called me, "dear Nephew"; on each of those chairs
Has gloated in righteousness, heard my prayers.

'Why didst thou dare the thorns of the grove,
Timidest trespasser, huntress of love?
Now thou hast peeped, and now dost know
What kind of creature is thine for foe.

'Not that she'll tear out thy innocent eyes,
Poison thy mouth with deviltries.
Watch thou, wait thou: soon will begin
The guile of a voice: hark! . . .' 'Come in. Come in!'

THE TRYST

Flee into some forgotten night and be
Of all dark long my moon-bright company:
Beyond the rumour even of Paradise come,
There, out of all remembrance, make our home:
Seek we some close hid shadow for our lair,
Hollowed by Noah's mouse beneath the chair
Wherein the Omnipotent, in slumber bound,
Nods till the piteous Trump of Judgment sound.
Perchance Leviathan of the deep sea
Would lease a lost mermaiden's grot to me,
There of your beauty we would joyance make—
A music wistful for the sea-nymph's sake:
Haply Elijah, o'er his spokes of fire,
Cresting steep Leo, or the heavenly Lyre,
Spied, tranced in azure of inanest space,
Some eyrie hostel, meet for human grace,
Where two might happy be—just you and I—
Lost in the uttermost of Eternity.
Think! In Time's smallest clock's minutest beat
Might there not rest be found for wandering feet?
Or, 'twixt the sleep and wake of Helen's dream,
Silence wherein to sing love's requiem?

No, no. Nor earth, nor air, nor fire, nor deep
Could lull poor mortal longingness asleep.
Somewhere there Nothing is; and there lost Man
Shall win what changeless vague of peace he can.

ALONE

The abode of the nightingale is bare,
Flowered frost congeals in the gelid air,
The fox howls from his frozen lair:
Alas, my loved one is gone,
I am alone:
It is winter.

Once the pink cast a winy smell,
The wild bee hung in the hyacinth bell,
Light in effulgence of beauty fell:
Alas, my loved one is gone,
I am alone:
It is winter.

My candle a silent fire doth shed,
Starry Orion hunts o'erhead;
Come moth, come shadow, the world is dead:
Alas, my loved one is gone,
I am alone;
It is winter.

THE GHOST

'Who knocks?' 'I, who was beautiful,
Beyond all dreams to restore,
I, from the roots of the dark thorn am hither.
And knock on the door.'

'Who speaks?' 'I—once was my speech
Sweet as the bird's on the air,
When echo lurks by the waters to heed;
'Tis I speak thee fair.'

'Dark is the hour!' 'Ay, and cold.'
'Lone is my house.' 'Ah, but mine?'
'Sight, touch, lips, eyes yearned in vain.'
'Long dead these to thine . . .'

Silence. Still faint on the porch
Brake the flames of the stars.
In gloom groped a hope-wearied hand
Over keys, bolts, and bars.

A face peered. All the grey night
In chaos of vacancy shone;
Nought but vast sorrow was there—
The sweet cheat gone.

BETRAYAL

She will not die, they say,
She will but put her beauty by
And hie away.

Oh, but her beauty gone, how lonely
Then will seem all reverie,
How black to me!

All things will sad be made
And every hope a memory,
All gladness dead.

Ghosts of the past will know
My weakest hour, and whisper to me,
And coldly go.

And hers in deep of sleep,
Clothed in its mortal beauty I shall see,
And, waking, weep.

Naught will my mind then find
In man's false Heaven my peace to be:
All blind, and blind.

THE CAGE

Why did you flutter in vain hope, poor bird,
Hard-pressed in your small cage of clay?
'Twas but a sweet, false echo that you heard,
Caught only a feint of day.

Still is the night all dark, a homeless dark.
Burn yet the unanswering stars. And silence brings
The same sea's desolate surge—sans bound or mark—
Of all your wanderings.

Fret now no more; be still. Those steadfast eyes,
  Those folded hands, they cannot set you free;
Only with beauty wake wild memories—
  Sorrow for where you are, for where you would be.

THE REMONSTRANCE

I was at peace until you came
And set a careless mind aflame.
I lived in quiet; cold, content;
All longing in safe banishment,
Until your ghostly lips and eyes
    Made wisdom unwise.

Naught was in me to tempt your feet
To seek a lodging. Quite forgot
Lay the sweet solitude we two
In childhood used to wander through;
Time's cold had closed my heart about;
    And shut you out.

Well, and what then? . . . O vision grave,
Take all the little all I have!
Strip me of what in voiceless thought
Life's kept of life, unhoped, unsought!—
Reverie and dream that memory must
    Hide deep in dust!

This only I say:—Though cold and bare
The haunted house you have chosen to share,
Still 'neath its walls the moonbeam goes
And trembles on the untended rose;
Still o'er its broken roof-tree rise
The starry arches of the skies;
And in your lightest word shall be
The thunder of an ebbing sea.

NOCTURNE

'Tis not my voice now speaks; but as a bird
In darkling forest hollows a sweet throat—
Pleads on till distant echo too hath heard
And doubles every note:
So love that shrouded dwells in mystery
Would cry and waken thee.

Thou Solitary, stir in thy still sleep!
All the night waits thee, must thou still dream on?
Furtive the shadows that about thee creep,
And cheat the shining footsteps of the moon:
Unseal thine eyes, it is my heart that sings,
And beats in vain its wings.

Lost in heaven's vague, the stars burn softly through
The world's dark latticings, we prisoned stray
Within its lovely labyrinth, and know
Mute seraphs guard the way
Even from silence unto speech, from love
To that self's self it still is dreaming of.

THE EXILE

I am that Adam who, with Snake for guest,
Hid anguished eyes upon Eve's piteous breast.
I am that Adam who, with broken wings,
Fled from the Seraph's brazen trumpetings.
Betrayed and fugitive, I still must roam
A world where sin, and beauty, whisper of Home.

Oh, from wide circuit, shall at length I see
Pure daybreak lighten again on Eden's tree?
Loosed from remorse and hope and love's distress,
Enrobe me again in my lost nakedness?
No more with wordless grief a loved one grieve,
But to Heaven's nothingness re-welcome Eve?

THE UNCHANGING

After the songless rose of evening,
Night quiet, dark, still,
In nodding cavalcade advancing
Starred the deep hill:
You, in the valley standing,
In your quiet wonder took
All that glamour, peace, and mystery
In one grave look.
Beauty hid your naked body,
Time dreamed in your bright hair,
In your eyes the constellations
Burned far and fair.

INVOCATION

The burning fire shakes in the night,
On high her silver candles gleam,
With far-flung arms enflamed with light,
The trees are lost in dream.

Come in thy beauty! 'tis my love,
Lost in far-wandering desire,
Hath in the darkling deep above
Set stars and kindled fire.

LIFE

Hearken, O dear, now strikes the hour we die;
We, who in one strange kiss
Have proved a dream the world's realities,
Turned each from other's darkness with a sigh,
Need heed no more of life, waste no more breath
On any other journey, but of death.

And yet: Oh, know we well
How each of us must prove Love's infidel;
Still out of ecstasy turn trembling back
To earth's same empty track
Of leaden day by day, and hour by hour, and be
Of all things lovely the cold mortuary.

VIGIL

Dark is the night,
  The fire burns faint and low,
Hours—days—years,
  Into grey ashes go;
I strive to read,
  But sombre is the glow.

Thumbed are the pages,
  And the print is small;
Mocking the winds
  That from the darkness call;
Feeble the fire that lends
  Its light withal.

O ghost, draw nearer;
  Let thy shadowy hair
Blot out the pages
  That we cannot share;
Be ours the one last leaf
  By Fate left bare!

Let's Finis scrawl,
  And then Life's book put by;
Turn each to each
  In all simplicity:
Ere the last flame is gone
  To warm us by.

APRIL MOON

Roses are sweet to smell and see,
  And lilies on the stem;
But rarer, stranger buds there be,
  And she was like to them.

The little moon that April brings,
  More lovely shade than light,
That, setting, silvers lonely hills
  Upon the verge of night—

Close to the world of my poor heart
  So stole she, still and clear;
Now that she's gone, O dark, and dark,
  The solitude, the fear.

CLEAR EYES

Clear eyes do dim at last,
  And cheeks outlive their rose.
Time, heedless of the past,
  No loving-kindness knows;
Chill unto mortal lip
    Still Lethe flows.

Griefs, too, but brief while stay,
  And sorrow, being o'er,
Its salt tears shed away,
  Woundeth the heart no more.
Stealthily lave those waters
    That solemn shore.

Ah, then, sweet face, burn on,
  While yet quick memory lives!
And Sorrow, ere thou art gone,
  Know that my heart forgives—
Ere yet, grown cold in peace,
    It loves not, nor grieves.

THE MONOLOGUE

Alas, O Lovely One,
Imprisoned here,
I tap; thou answerest not,
I doubt, and fear.
Yet transparent as glass these walls,
If thou lean near.

Last dusk, at those high bars
There came, scarce-heard,
Claws, fluttering feathers,
Of deluded bird—
With one shrill, scared, faint note
The silence stirred.

Rests in that corner,
In puff of dust, a straw—
Vision of harvest-fields
I never saw,
Of strange green streams and hills,
Forbidden by law.

These things I whisper,
For I see—in mind—
Thy caged cheek whiten
At the wail of wind,
That thin breast wasting; unto
Woe resigned.

Take comfort, listen!
Once we twain were free;
There was a Country—
Lost the memory . . .
Lay thy cold brow on hand,
And dream with me.

Awaits me torture;
I have smelt their rack;
From spectral groaning wheel

Have turned me back;
Thumbscrew and boot, and then—
The yawning sack.

Lean closer, then!
Lay palm on stony wall.
Let but thy ghost beneath
Thine eyelids call:
'Courage, my brother!' Nought
Can then appal.

Yet coward, coward am I,
And drink I must
When clanks the pannikin
With the longed-for crust;
Though heart within is sour
With disgust.

Long hours there are,
When mutely tapping—well,
Is it to Vacancy
I these tidings tell?
Knock these numb fingers against
An empty cell?

Nay, answer not.
Let still mere longing make
Thy presence sure to me,
While in doubt I shake:
Be but my Faith in thee,
For sanity's sake.

FORGIVENESS

'O thy flamed cheek,
Those locks with weeping wet,
Eyes that, forlorn and meek,
On mine are set.

'Poor hands, poor feeble wings,
Folded, a-droop, O sad!
See, 'tis my heart that sings
To make thee glad.

'My mouth breathes love, thou dear.
All that I am and know
Is thine. My breast—draw near:
Be grieved not so!'

GOLD

Sighed the wind to the wheat:—
'The Queen who is slumbering there,
Once bewildered the rose;
Scorned, "Thou un-fair!"
Once, from that bird-whirring court,
Ascended the ruinous stair.
Aloft, on that weed-hung turret, suns
Smote on her hair—
Of a gold by Archiac sought,
Of a gold sea-hid,
Of a gold that from core of quartz
No flame shall bid
Pour into light of the air
For God's Jews to see.'

Mocked the wheat to the wind:—
'Kiss me! Kiss me!'

THE SLEEPER

The Lovely, sleeping, lay in bed,
Her limbs, from quiet foot to chin,
Still as the dust of one that's dead
Whose spirit waits the entering-in.

Yet her young cheek with life's faint dye
  Was mantled o'er; her gentle breast
Like sea at peace with starry sky,
  Moved with a heart at rest.

Fair country of a thousand springs,
  Calm hill and vale! Those hidden eyes
And tongue that daylong talks and sings,
  Wait only for the sun to rise.

Let but a bird call in that ear,
  Let beam of day that window wan,
This hidden one will, wakening, hear,
  And deathlike slumber-swoon be gone:

Her ardent eyes once more will shine,
  She will uplift her hair-crowned head;
At lip, miraculous, life's wine,
  At hand, its wondrous bread.

THE HUNTER

'Why wilt thou take my heart? It fawnlike flies,
'Frighted at clarion of thy hunting cries,
And shrinks benumbed beneath thy jealous eyes.

'Shun those green solitudes, these paths and vales
Where winds the grasses tell their faint-sung tales
Of distant Ocean's secret nightingales;

'Of frail foam-bubbles, spun of light and air,
From glass wherein sirens braid their sun-gilt hair,
Watching their round mouths chaunt a dying air. . . .

'O arrows, pierce me not! O horns, be still!
Sweet God, divine compassion have: or kill!'

THE CAPTIVE

I twined a net; I drove a stake; I laid a glittering bait.
With still of dewfall stepped my prey; cried—and cried too late.
I clutched him by his golden curls: I penned his flutterings.
Secure within a golden cage he beats in vain his wings.

But why is now their beauty gone
From woods where once it happy shone?
Why is my bosom desolate,
When entering in at fall of eve,
I listen at the wicket gate,
And hear my captive grieve?

LUCY

Strange—as I sat brooding here,
While memory plied her quiet thread,
Your once-loved face came back, my dear,
Amid the distant dead.

That pleasant cheek, hair smooth and brown,
Clear brows, and wistful eyes—yet gay:
You stand, in your alpaca gown,
And ghost my heart away.

I was a child then; nine years old—
And you a woman. Well, stoop close,
To heed a passion never told
Under how faded a rose!

Do you remember? Few my pence:
I hoarded them with a miser's care,
And bought you, in passionate innocence,
A birthday maidenhair.

I see its fronds. Again I sit,
Hunched up in bed, in the dark, alone,
Crazed with those eyes that, memory-lit,
Now ponder on my own.

You gave me not a thought, 'tis true—
Precocious, silly child; and yet,
Perhaps of all you have loved—loved you,
    I may the last forget.

And though no single word of this
You heed—a lifetime gone—at rest;
I would that all remembrances
    As gently pierced my breast!

TWILIGHT

When to the inward darkness of my mind
I bid your face come, not one hue replies
Of that curved cheek, no, nor the faint-tinged rose
Of lips, nor smile between the mouth and eyes:
Only the eyes themselves, past telling, seem
To break in beauty in the twilight there,
And out of solitude your very ghost
Steals through the scarce-seen shadow of your hair.

THE TRYST

Faint now the colours in the West;
    And, stilled with lapse of day,
All life within it laid to rest,
    The wintry wood grows grey.

Frost enlines the withered flower,
    Its hips and haws now blackening are,
The slender naked tree-tops cower
    Beneath the evening-star.

Pace we then softly, you and I,
    Nor stir one England-wintering bird—
Start not!—'twas but some wild thing's cry,
    No wailing ghost you heard.

Yet ghosts there are, remote and chill,
  Waiting the moon's phantasmal fire,
But not for us to heed, until
  We too doff Earth's attire.

Oh, far from home we both shall be,
  When we, with them, shall coldly brood
On lovers twain, like you and me,
  Trespassing in this wood.

THE IRREVOCABLE

Weep no more, thou weary one;
Tears—and so beloved a face!
Raindrops on a daybreak flower—
Token of cold midnight's grace—
No more radiant are than these.
Both of transient darkness tell;
And but one last beam of morning
  Either will dispel.

I thy midnight was. . . . Yet word,
Easy, innocent of guile,
Weeping eyes and childlike lips
  Have conjured to a smile.
All forgotten, all forgiven.
Why remorse, then? . . . Well I know
The few clear stars still mine in heaven
Never shall now as brightly show.

THE MOMENT

O Time—the heedless child you are!
A daisy, the most distant star
Fall to your toying scimitar.

And I? And this loved face? We too
Are things but of a moment. True:
But then, poor youngling, so are you!

Dream on! In your small company
We are contented merely to be—
Yes, even to Eternity.

THE LAST ARROW

There came a boy,
Full quiver on his back—
Tapped at my door ajar.

'No, no, my child,' said I,
'I nothing lack;
And see!—the evening star!'

Finger on string,
His dangerous eyes
Gazed boldly into mine:

'Know thou my mother
An Immortal is!
Guard thee, and hope resign!'

'But patience,' I pleaded,
Pointing to a shelf,
Where rusting arrows lay.

'All these, times gone,
You squandered on myself,
Why come—so late, to-day?'

These words scarce uttered,
I discerned a Shade
Shadow till then had hid;

Clang went that bowstring,
And past wit to evade,
Into my bosom slid

His final dart.
He shook his rascal head,
Its curls by the lamp-shine gilt:

'Thank thou the Gods!
Here's One, I vow,' he said,
'Not even thee shall jilt.'

THE LOOKING-GLASS

'Nothing is so sure that it
May not in a moment flit:
Quench the candle, gone are all
The wavering shadows on the wall.
Eros, like Time, is winged. And, why?
To warn us, dear, he too can fly.
Watch, now, your bright image here
In this water, calm and fair—
Those clear brown eyes, that dark brown hair.
See, I fling a pebble in;
What distortions now begin!
Refluent ripples sweep and sway,
Chasing all I love away.
But, imagine a strange glass
Which, to gaze, gave back, alas,
Nothing but a crystal wall,
And else, no hint of you at all:
No rose on cheek, no red on lip,
No trace of beauty's workmanship.
That, my dear, for me, for you,
Precisely is what life might do.
Might, I say. . . . Oh, then, how sweet
Is it by this stream to sit,
And in its molten mirror see

All that is now reality:
The interlacing boughs, the sun's
Tiny host of flickering moons,
That rainbow kingfisher, and these
Demure, minute anemones—
Cherubim, in heaven's blue,
Leaning their wizard faces too—
Lost in delight at seeing you.'

WINTER DUSK

Dark frost was in the air without,
  The dusk was still with cold and gloom,
When less than even a shadow came
    And stood within the room.

But of the three around the fire,
  None turned a questioning head to look,
Still read a clear voice, on and on,
    Still stooped they o'er their book.

The children watched their mother's eyes
  Moving on softly line to line;
It seemed to listen too—that shade,
    Yet made no outward sign.

The fire-flames crooned a tiny song,
  No cold wind stirred the wintry tree;
The children both in Faërie dreamed
    Beside their mother's knee.

And nearer yet that spirit drew
  Above that heedless one, intent
Only on what the simple words
    Of her small story meant.

No voiceless sorrow grieved her mind,
  No memory her bosom stirred;
Nor dreamed she, as she read to two,
    'Twas surely three who heard.

Yet when, the story done, she smiled
From face to face, serene and clear,
A love, half dread, sprang up, as she
Leaned close and drew them near.

THE REVENANT

O all ye fair ladies with your colours and your graces,
And your eyes clear in flame of candle and hearth,
Toward the dark of this old window lift not up your smiling faces,
Where a Shade stands forlorn from the cold of the earth.

God knows I could not rest for one I still was thinking of;
Like a rose sheathed in beauty her spirit was to me;
Now out of unforgottenness a bitter draught I'm drinking of,
'Tis sad of such beauty unremembered to be.

Men all are shades, O Women. Winds wist not of the way they blow.
Apart from your kindness, life's at best but a snare.
Though a tongue, now past praise, this bitter thing doth say, I know
What solitude means, and how, homeless, I fare.

Strange, strange, are ye all—except in beauty shared with her—
Since I seek one I loved, yet was faithless to in death.
Not life enough I heaped, so thus my heart must fare with her,
Now wrapt in the gross clay, bereft of life's breath.

THUS HER TALE

Spake the fire-tinged bramble, bossed with gleaming fruit and blossoming,
Gently serpentining in the air a blunted tongue:—
'Far too long these bones I hide have blackened in my covert here,
Too long their noxious odour to my sweetness now hath clung.
Would they were gross clay, and their evil spell removed from me;
How much lovelier I, if my roots not thence had sprung.'

Breathed the wind of sundown, 'Ay, this haunt is long years sour
to me;
But naught on earth that's human can my fancy free beguile.
Wings are mine far fleeter than the birds' that clip these branches;
Arabian rich the burden which for honeyed mile on mile
Is wafted on my bosom, hill to ocean, wood to valeland.
Anathema on relics that my fragrances defile!'

Stirred a thousand frondlets and the willow tree replied to it:—
'Sty and mixen, foetid pool, and carrion-shed—whose these?
Yet earth makes sweet the foulest; naught—naught stays long
unclean to her;
Thou, too, howe'er reluctant, art her servant, gliding Breeze.
Restrain thy fretting pudency; in pity sigh for one I knew—
The woman whose unburied bones in thornbrake take their
ease.'

'*Urkkh*: when dark hath thicked to night,' croaked vermin toad
that crouched near-by,
'And the stars that mock in heaven unto midnight's cope have
clomb,
When the shades of all the humans that in life were brutal foes to
me
Lift thready lamentation from the churchyard's rancid loam—
Return doth she in mortal guise 'gainst whom I bear no enmity,
Foredoomed by fate this treacherous field for aye to haunt and
roam.'

'Pictured once her image I,' sang sliding brook its rushes from,
'That sallow face, and eyes that seemed to stare as if in dream,
Narrow shoulders, long lean hands, and hair like withered grass in
hue,
Pale lips drawn thwart with grieving in stars' silver mocking
beam.
Once, too, I heard her story, but little I remember now,
Though the blood that gave her power to suffer then imbrued
my stream.'

Stony rock groaned forth its voice, 'No mirror featly shattered I,
Blind I am by nature, but, I boast, not deaf or dumb,
Small truck I pay to Time's decay, nor mark what wounds black winter makes.
Not mine to know what depths of snow have thawed and left me numb—
Since an eve when flowers had cast their seed, and evening cooled my brow again.
And I echoed to a voice that whispered, "Loved one, I have come."'

Wafting through the woodland swept an owl from out the silentness,
'*Too wittoo woo*,' she hooted. 'A human comes this way,
Gliding as on feathered heel, so tenuous that the thorns she skirts
To eyes bright-glassed for glooms like mine show black beyond her grey.
A tryst she keeps. Beware, good friends, not mine day's mortal company,
Hungry my brood for juicier fare,' she squawked, and plumed away.

Lone, in a shoal of milk-white cloud, bathed now the punctual fickle moon
That nook of brook and willow, long unpolled, with silvery glare:—
'Unstilled yet tranquil Phantom, see, thou canst not hide thy form from me:
When last thy anguished body trod these meadows fresh and fair,
I, the ringing sand-dunes of the vast Sahara hoared with light:
What secret calls thee from the shades; why hither dost thou fare?' . . .

Small beauty graced the spectre pondering mute beneath the willow-boughs
O'er relics long grown noisome to the bramble and the breeze;
A hand upon her narrow breast, her head bent low in shadowiness;

'I've come,' sighed voice like muted bell of nightbird in the trees,
'To tell again for all to hear, the wild remorse that suffers me,
No single thought of rest or hope whereon to muse at ease.

'Self-slaughtered I, for one I loved, who could not give me love again,
Uncounted now the Autumns since that twilight hour malign
When, insensate for escape from a hunger naught could satisfy,
I vowed to God no more would I in torment live and pine.
Alas! He turned His face away, and woeful penance laid on me—
That every night make tryst must I till life my love resign.'

Furtive fell the anxious glance she cast that dreadful hiding-place;
Strangely still and muted ceased the tones in which she spake.
Shadow filled her vacant place. The moon withdrew in cloud again.
Hushed the ripples grieving to the pebbles in their wake.
'Thus her *tale*!' quoth sod to sod. 'Not ours, good friends, to challenge it;
Though her blood still cries for vengeance on her murderer from this brake!'

SOLITUDE

Ghosts there must be with me in this old house,
Deepening its midnight as the clock beats on.
Whence else upwelled—strange, sweet, yet ominous—
That moment of happiness, and then was gone?

Nimbler than air-borne music, heart may call
A speechless message to the inward ear,
As secret even as that which then befell,
Yet nought that listening could make more clear.

Delicate, subtle senses, instant, fleet!—
But oh, how near the verge at which they fail!
In vain, self hearkens for the fall of feet
Soft as its own may be, beyond the pale.

WHICH?

'What did you say?'
'I? Nothing.' 'No? . . .
What was that sound?'
'When?'
'Then.'
'I do not know.'
'Whose eyes were those on us?
'Where?'
'There.'
'No eyes I saw.'
'Speech, footfall, presence—how cold the night may be!'
'Phantom or fantasy, it's all one to *me*.'

THE CAPTIVE

When gloaming droops
To the raven's croak,
And the nightjar churs
From his time-gnarled oak
In the thunder-stricken wood:

When the drear dark waters
'Neath sallows hoar
Shake the veils of night
With their hollow roar,
Plunging deep in flood;

Spectral, wan
From unquiet rest,
A phantom walks
With anguished breast,
Doomed to love's solitude.

Her footstep is leaf-like,
Light as air,

Her raiment scarce stirs
The gossamer.
While from shadowy hood

In the wood-light pale
Her dream-ridden eyes,
Without sorrow or tear,
Speculation, surmise,
Wildly, insanely brood.

THE CHILDREN OF STARE

Winter is fallen early
On the house of Stare;
Birds in reverberating flocks
Haunt its ancestral box;
Bright are the plenteous berries
In clusters in the air.

Still is the fountain's music,
The dark pool icy still,
Whereupon a small and sanguine sun
Floats in a mirror on,
Into a West of crimson,
From a South of daffodil.

'Tis strange to see young children
In such a wintry house;
Like rabbits' on the frozen snow
Their tell-tale footprints go;
Their laughter rings like timbrels
'Neath evening ominous:

Their small and heightened faces
Like wine-red winter buds;
Their frolic bodies gentle as
Flakes in the air that pass,
Frail as the twirling petal
From the briar of the woods.

Above them silence lours,
Still as an arctic sea;
Light fails; night falls; the wintry moon

Glitters; the crocus soon
Will open grey and distracted
On earth's austerity:

Thick mystery, wild peril,
Law like an iron rod:—
Yet sport they on in Spring's attire,
Each with his tiny fire
Blown to a core of ardour
By the awful breath of God.

THE GLIMPSE

Art thou asleep? or have thy wings
Wearied of my unchanging skies?
Or, haply, is it fading dreams
Are in my eyes?

Not even an echo in my heart
Tells me the courts thy feet trod last,
Bare as a leafless wood it is,
The summer past.

My inmost mind is like a book
The reader dulls with lassitude,
Wherein the same old lovely words
Sound poor and rude.

Yet through this vapid surface, I
Seem to see old-time deeps; I see,
Past the dark painting of the hour,
Life's ecstasy.

Only a moment; as when day
Is set, and in the shade of night,
Through all the clouds that compassed her,
Stoops into sight.

Pale, changeless, everlasting Dian,
Gleams on the prone Endymion,
Troubles the dulness of his dreams:
And then is gone.

THE PHANTOM

Wilt thou never come again,
Beauteous one?
Yet the woods are green and dim,
Yet the birds' deluding cry
Echoes in the hollow sky,
Yet the falling waters brim
The clear pool which thou wast fain
To paint thy lovely cheek upon,
Beauteous one!

I may see the thorny rose
Stir and wake
The dark dewdrop on her gold;
But thy secret will she keep
Half divulged—yet all untold,
Since a child's heart woke from sleep.

The faltering sunbeam fades and goes;
The night-bird whistles in the brake;
The willows quake;
Utter quiet falls; the wind
Sighs no more.
Yet it seems the silence yearns
But to catch thy fleeting foot;
Yet the wandering glow-worm burns
Lest her lamp should light thee not—
Thee whom I shall never find;
Though thy shadow lean before,
Thou thyself return'st no more—
Never more.

All the world's woods, tree o'er tree,
Come to nought.
Birds, flowers, beasts, how transient they,
Angels of a flying day.
Love is quenched; dreams drown in sleep;
Ruin nods along the deep:
Only thou immortally
Hauntest on
This poor earth in Time's flux caught;
Hauntest on, pursued, unwon,
Phantom child of memory,
Beauteous one!

THE TIRED CUPID

The thin moonlight with trickling ray,
Thridding the boughs of silver may,
Trembles in beauty, pale and cool,
On folded flower, and mantled pool.
All in a haze the rushes lean—
And he—he sits, with chin between
His two cold hands; his bare feet set
Deep in the grasses, green and wet.
About his head a hundred rings
Of gold loop down to meet his wings,
Whose feathers, arched their stillness through,
Gleam with slow-gathering drops of dew.
The mouse-bat peers; the stealthy vole
Creeps from the covert of its hole;
A shimmering moth its pinions furls,
Grey in the moonshine of his curls;
'Neath the faint stars the night-airs stray,
Scattering the fragrance of the may;
And with each stirring of the bough
Shadow beclouds his childlike brow.

ARABIA

Far are the shades of Arabia,
  Where the Princes ride at noon,
'Mid the verdurous vales and thickets,
  Under the ghost of the moon;
And so dark is that vaulted purple
  Flowers in the forest rise
And toss into blossom 'gainst the phantom stars
  Pale in the noonday skies.

Sweet is the music of Arabia
  In my heart, when out of dreams
I still in the thin clear mirk of dawn
  Descry her gliding streams;
Hear her strange lutes on the green banks
  Ring loud with the grief and delight
Of the dim-silked, dark-haired Musicians
  In the brooding silence of night.

They haunt me—her lutes and her forests;
  No beauty on earth I see
But shadowed with that dream recalls
  Her loveliness to me:
Still eyes look coldly upon me,
  Cold voices whisper and say—
'He is crazed with the spell of far Arabia,
  They have stolen his wits away.'

THE MOUNTAINS

Still and blanched and cold and lone
  The icy hills far off from me
With frosty ulys overgrown
  Stand in their sculptured secrecy.

No path of theirs the chamois fleet
  Treads, with a nostril to the wind;
O'er their ice-marbled glaciers beat
  No wings of eagles in my mind—

Yea, in my mind these mountains rise,
  Their perils dyed with evening's rose;
And still my ghost sits at my eyes
  And thirsts for their untroubled snows.

QUEEN DJENIRA

When Queen Djenira slumbers through
  The sultry noon's repose,
From out her dreams, as soft she lies,
  A faint thin music flows.

Her lovely hands lie narrow and pale
  With gilded nails, her head
Couched in its banded nets of gold
  Lies pillowed on her bed.

The little Nubian boys who fan
  Her cheeks and tresses clear,
Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful voices
  Seem afar to hear.

They slide their eyes, and nodding, say,
  'Queen Djenira walks to-day
The courts of the lord Pthamasar
  Where the sweet birds of Psuṭhys are.'

And those of earth about her porch
  Of shadow cool and grey
Their sidelong beaks in silence lean,
  And silent flit away.

NEVER-TO-BE

Down by the waters of the sea
Reigns the King of Never-to-be.
His palace walls are black with night;
His torches star and moon's light,
And for his timepiece deep and grave
Beats on the green unhastening wave.

Windswept are his high corridors;
His pleasance the sea-mantled shores;
For sentinel a shadow stands
With hair in heaven, and cloudy hands;
And round his bed, king's guards to be,
Watch pines in iron solemnity.

His hound is mute; his steed at will
Roams pastures deep with asphodel;
His queen is to her slumber gone;
His courtiers mute lie, hewn in stone;
He hath forgot where he did hide
His sceptre in the mountain-side.

Grey-capped and muttering, mad is he—
The childless King of Never-to-be;
For all his people in the deep
Keep, everlasting, fast asleep;
And all his realm is foam and rain,
Whispering of what comes not again.

THE DARK CHATEAU

In dreams a dark château
  Stands ever open to me,
In far ravines dream-waters flow,
  Descending soundlessly;

Above its peaks the eagle floats,
  Lone in a sunless sky;
Mute are the golden woodland throats
  Of the birds flitting by.

No voice is audible. The wind
  Sleeps in its peace.
No flower of the light can find
  Refuge beneath its trees;
Only the darkening ivy climbs
  Mingled with wilding rose,
And cypress, morn and evening, time's
  Black shadow throws.

All vacant, and unknown;
  Only the dreamer steps
From stone to hollow stone,
  Where the green moss sleeps,
Peers at the river in its deeps,
  The eagle lone in the sky,
While the dew of evening drips,
  Coldly and silently.

Would that I could steal in!—
  Into each secret room;
Would that my sleep-bright eyes could win
  To the inner gloom;
Gaze from its high windows,
  Far down its mouldering walls,
Where amber-clear still Lethe flows,
  And foaming falls.

But ever as I gaze,
  From slumber soft doth come
Some touch my stagnant sense to raise
  To its old earthly home;
Fades then that sky serene;
  And peak of ageless snow;
Fades to a paling dawn-lit green,
  My dark château.

THE DWELLING-PLACE

Deep in a forest where the kestrel screamed,
  Beside a lake of water, clear as glass,
The time-worn windows of a stone house gleamed
    Named only 'Alas'.

Yet happy as the wild birds in the glades
  Of that green forest, thridding the still air
With low continued heedless serenades,
    Its heedless people were.

The throbbing chords of violin and lute,
  The lustre of lean tapers in dark eyes,
Fair colours, beauteous flowers, faint-bloomed fruit
    Made earth seem Paradise

To them that dwelt within this lonely house:
  Like children of the gods in lasting peace,
They ate, sang, danced, as if each day's carouse
    Need never pause, nor cease.

Some to the hunt would wend, with hound and horn,
  And clash of silver, beauty, bravery, pride,
Heeding not one who on white horse upborne
    With soundless hoofs did ride.

Dreamers there were who watched the hours away
  Beside a fountain's foam. And in the sweet
Of phantom evening, 'neath the night-bird's lay,
    Did loved with loved-one meet.

All, all were children, for, the long day done,
  They barred the heavy door against lightfoot fear;
And few words spake though one known face was gone,
    Yet still seemed hovering near.

They heaped the bright fire higher; poured dark wine;
  And in long revelry dazed the questioning eye;
Curtained three-fold the heart-dismaying shine
    Of midnight streaming by.

They shut the dark out from the painted wall,
  With candles dared the shadow at the door,
Sang down the faint reiterated call
    Of those who came no more.

Yet clear above that portal plain was writ,
  Confronting each at length alone to pass
Out of its beauty into night star-lit,
    That worn 'Alas!'

THE LISTENERS

'Is there anybody there?' said the Traveller,
  Knocking on the moonlit door;
And his horse in the silence champed the grasses
  Of the forest's ferny floor:
And a bird flew up out of the turret,
  Above the Traveller's head:
And he smote upon the door again a second time;
  'Is there anybody there?' he said.
But no one descended to the Traveller;
  No head from the leaf-fringed sill
Leaned over and looked into his grey eyes,
  Where he stood perplexed and still.
But only a host of phantom listeners
  That dwelt in the lone house then
Stood listening in the quiet of the moonlight
  To that voice from the world of men:
Stood thronging the faint moonbeams on the dark stair,
  That goes down to the empty hall,
Hearkening in an air stirred and shaken
  By the lonely Traveller's call.
And he felt in his heart their strangeness,
  Their stillness answering his cry,
While his horse moved, cropping the dark turf,
  'Neath the starred and leafy sky;

For he suddenly smote on the door, even
  Louder, and lifted his head:—
'Tell them I came, and no one answered,
  That I kept my word,' he said.
Never the least stir made the listeners,
  Though every word he spake
Fell echoing through the shadowiness of the still house
  From the one man left awake:
Ay, they heard his foot upon the stirrup,
  And the sound of iron on stone,
And how the silence surged softly backward,
  When the plunging hoofs were gone.

TIME PASSES

There was nought in the Valley
  But a Tower of Ivory,
Its base enwreathed with red
  Flowers that at evening
  Caught the sun's crimson
As to Ocean low he sped.

Lucent and lovely
  It stood in the morning
Under a trackless hill;
  With snows eternal
  Muffling its summit,
And silence ineffable.

Sighing of solitude
  Winds from the cold heights
Haunted its yellowing stone;
  At noon its shadow
  Stretched athwart cedars
Whence every bird was flown.

Its stair was broken,
Its starlit walls were
Fretted; its flowers shone
Wide at the portal,
Full-blown and fading,
Their last faint fragrance gone.

And on high in its lantern
A shape of the living
Watched o'er a shoreless sea,
From a Tower rotting
With age and weakness,
Once lovely as ivory.

THE JOURNEY

Heart-sick of his journey was the Wanderer;
Footsore and parched was he;
And a Witch who long had lurked by the wayside,
Looked out of sorcery.

'Lift up your eyes, you lonely Wanderer,'
She peeped from her casement small;
'Here's shelter and quiet to give you rest, young man,
And apples for thirst withal.'

And he looked up out of his sad reverie,
And saw all the woods in green,
With birds that flitted feathered in the dappling,
The jewel-bright leaves between.

And he lifted up his face towards her lattice,
And there, alluring-wise,
Slanting through the silence of the long past,
Dwelt the still green Witch's eyes.

And vaguely from the hiding-place of memory
Voices seemed to cry:
'What is the darkness of one brief life-time
To the deaths thou hast made us die?

'Heed not the words of the Enchantress
  Who would us still betray!'
And sad with the echo of their reproaches,
  Doubting, he turned away.

'I may not shelter beneath your roof, lady,
  Nor in this wood's green shadow seek repose,
Nor will your apples quench the thirst
  A homesick wanderer knows.'

' "Homesick" forsooth!' she softly mocked him:
  And the beauty in her face
Made in the sunshine pale and trembling
  A stillness in that place.

And he sighed, as if in fear, that young Wanderer,
  Looking to left and to right,
Where the endless narrow road swept onward,
  Till in distance lost to sight.

And there fell upon his sense the brier,
  Haunting the air with its breath,
And the faint shrill sweetness of the birds' throats,
  Their tent of leaves beneath.

And there was the Witch, in no wise heeding;
  Her arbour, and fruit-filled dish,
Her pitcher of well-water, and clear damask—
  All that the weary wish.

And the last gold beam across the green world
  Faltered and failed, as he
Remembered his solitude and the dark night's
  Inhospitality.

And he looked upon the Witch with eyes of sorrow
  In the darkening of the day;
And turned him aside into oblivion;
  And the voices died away. . . .

And the Witch stepped down from her casement:
  In the hush of night he heard
The calling and wailing in dewy thicket
  Of bird to hidden bird.

And gloom stole all her burning crimson,
  Remote and faint in space
As stars in gathering shadow of the evening
  Seemed now her phantom face.

And one night's rest shall be a myriad,
  Mid dreams that come and go;
Till heedless fate, unmoved by weakness, bring him
  This same strange by-way through:

To the beauty of earth that fades in ashes,
  The lips of welcome, and the eyes
More beauteous than the feeble shine of Hesper
  Lone in the lightening skies:

Till once again the Witch's guile entreat him;
  But, worn with wisdom, he
Steadfast and cold shall choose the dark night's
  Inhospitality.

THE LITTLE SALAMANDER

TO MARGOT

When I go free,
I think 'twill be
A night of stars and snow,
And the wild fires of frost shall light
My footsteps as I go;
Nobody—nobody will be there
With groping touch, or sight,
To see me in my bush of hair
Dance burning through the night.

THE EMPTY HOUSE

See this house, how dark it is
Beneath its vast-boughed trees!
Not one trembling leaflet cries
To that Watcher in the skies—
'Remove, remove thy searching gaze,
Innocent of heaven's ways,
Brood not, Moon, so wildly bright,
On secrets hidden from sight.'

'Secrets,' sighs the night-wind,
'Vacancy is all I find;
Every keyhole I have made
Wails a summons, faint and sad,
No voice ever answers me,
Only vacancy.'
'Once, once . . .' the cricket shrills,
And far and near the quiet fills
With its tiny voice, and then
Hush falls again.

Mute shadows creeping slow
Mark how the hours go.
Every stone is mouldering slow.
And the least winds that blow
Some minutest atom shake,
Some fretting ruin make
In roof and walls. How black it is
Beneath these thick-boughed trees!

THE STRANGER

In the woods as I did walk,
Dappled with the moon's beam,
I did with a Stranger talk,
And his name was Dream.

Spurred his heel, dark his cloak,
  Shady-wide his bonnet's brim;
His horse beneath a silvery oak
  Grazed as I talked with him.

Softly his breast-brooch burned and shone;
  Hill and deep were in his eyes;
One of his hands held mine, and one
  The fruit that makes men wise.

Wondrously strange was earth to see,
  Flowers white as milk did gleam;
Spread to Heaven the Assyrian Tree,
  Over my head with Dream.

Dews were still betwixt us twain;
  Stars a trembling beauty shed;
Yet, not a whisper comes again
  Of the words he said.

MUSIC

When music sounds, gone is the earth I know,
And all her lovely things even lovelier grow;
Her flowers in vision flame, her forest trees
Lift burdened branches, stilled with ecstasies.

When music sounds, out of the water rise
Naiads whose beauty dims my waking eyes,
Rapt in strange dreams burns each enchanted face,
With solemn echoing stirs their dwelling-place.

When music sounds, all that I was I am
Ere to this haunt of brooding dust I came;
While from Time's woods break into distant song
The swift-winged hours, as I hasten along.

THE THREE STRANGERS

Far are those tranquil hills,
  Dyed with fair evening's rose;
On urgent, secret errand bent,
    A traveller goes.

Approach him strangers three,
  Barefooted, cowled; their eyes
Scan the lone, hastening solitary
    With dumb surmise.

One instant in close speech
  With them he doth confer:
God-sped, he hasteneth on,
    That anxious traveller . . .

I was that man—in a dream:
  And each world's night in vain
I patient wait on sleep to unveil
    Those vivid hills again.

Would that they three could know
  How yet burns on in me
Love—from one lost in Paradise—
    For their grave courtesy.

THE OLD ANGLER

Twilight leaned mirrored in a pool
  Where willow boughs swept green and hoar,
Silk-clear the water, calm and cool,
  Silent the weedy shore:

There in abstracted, brooding mood
  One fishing sate. His painted float
Motionless as a planet stood;
  Motionless his boat.

A melancholy soul was this,
  With lantern jaw, gnarled hand, vague eye;
Huddled in pensive solitariness
  He had fished existence by.

Empty his creel; stolen his bait—
  Impassively he angled on,
Though mist now showed the evening late
  And daylight wellnigh gone.

Suddenly, like a tongueless bell,
  Downward his gaudy cork did glide;
A deep, low-gathering, gentle swell
  Spread slowly far and wide.

Wheeped out his tackle from noiseless winch,
  And furtive as a thief, his thumb,
With nerve intense, wound inch by inch
  A line no longer numb.

What fabulous spoil could thus unplayed
  Gape upward to a mortal air?—
He stoops engrossed; his tanned cheek greyed;
  His heart stood still: for there,

Wondrously fairing, beneath the skin
  Of secretly bubbling water seen,
Swims, not the silver of scale and fin—
  But gold inmixt with green.

Deeply astir in oozy bed,
  The darkening mirror ripples and rocks:
And lo—a wan-pale, lovely head,
  Hook tangled in its locks!

Cold from her haunt—a Naiad slim.
  Shoulder and cheek gleamed ivory white;
Though now faint stars stood over him,
  The hour hard on night.

Her green eyes gazed like one half-blind
  In sudden radiance; her breast
Breathed the sweet air, while gently twined,
  'Gainst the cold water pressed,

Her lean webbed hands. She floated there,
  Light as a scentless petalled flower,
Water-drops dewing from her hair
  In tinkling beadlike shower.

So circling sidelong, her tender throat
  Uttered a grieving, desolate wail;
Shrill o'er the dark pool lapsed its note,
  Piteous as nightingale.

Ceased Echo. And he?—a life's remorse
  Welled to a tongue unapt to charm,
But never a word broke harsh and hoarse
  To quiet her alarm.

With infinite stealth his twitching thumb
  Tugged softly at the tautened gut,
Bubble-light, fair, her lips now dumb,
  She moved, and struggled not;

But with set, wild, unearthly eyes
  Pale-gleaming, fixed as if in fear,
She couched in the water, with quickening sighs,
  And floated near.

In hollow heaven the stars were at play;
  Wan glow-worms greened the pool-side grass;
Dipped the wide-bellied boat. His prey
  Gazed on; nor breathed. Alas!—

Long sterile years had come and gone;
  Youth, like a distant dream, was sped;
Heart, hope, and eyes had hungered on. . . .
  He turned a shaking head,

And clumsily groped amid the gold,
  Sleek with night dews, of that tangling hair,
Till pricked his finger keen and cold
  The barb imbedded there.

Teeth clenched, he drew his knife—'Snip, snip,'—
  Groaned, and sate shivering back; and she,
Treading the water with birdlike dip,
  Shook her sweet shoulders free:

Drew backward, smiling, infatuate fair,
  His life's disasters in her eyes,
All longing and folly, grief, despair,
  Daydreams and mysteries.

She stooped her brow; laid low her cheek,
  And, steering on that silk-tressed craft,
Out from the listening, leaf-hung creek,
  Tossed up her chin, and laughed—

A mocking, icy, inhuman note.
  One instant flashed that crystal breast,
Leaned, and was gone. Dead-still the boat:
  And the deep dark at rest.

Flits moth to flower. A water-rat
  Noses the placid ripple. And lo!
Streams a lost meteor. Night is late,
  And daybreak zephyrs flow. . . .

And he—the cheated? Dusk till morn,
  Insensate, even of hope forsook,
He muttering squats, aloof, forlorn,
  Dangling a baitless hook.

THE FAIRY IN WINTER

There was a Fairy—flake of winter—
Who, when the snow came, whispering, Silence,
Sister crystal to crystal sighing,
Making of meadow argent palace,
  Night a star-sown solitude,
Cried 'neath her frozen eaves, 'I burn here!'

Wings diaphanous, beating bee-like,
Wand within fingers, locks enspangled,
Icicle foot, lip sharp as scarlet,
She lifted her eyes in her pitch-black hollow—
Green as stalks of weeds in water—
Breathed: stirred.

Rilled from her heart the ichor, coursing,
Flamed and awoke her slumbering magic.
Softlier than moth's her pinions trembled;
Out into blackness, light-like, she flittered,
Leaving her hollow cold, forsaken.

In air, o'er crystal, rang twangling night-wind.
Bare, rimed pine-woods murmured lament.

NOT THAT WAY

No, no. Guard thee. Get thee gone.
        Not that way.
See; the louring clouds glide on,
Skirting West to South; and see,
The green light under that sycamore tree—
        Not that way.

There the leaden trumpets blow,
        Solemn and slow.
There the everlasting walls

Frown above the waterfalls
Silver and cold;
Timelessly old:
Not that way.

Not toward Death, who, stranger, fairer,
Than any siren turns his head—
Than sea-couched siren, arched with rainbows,
Where knell the waves of her ocean bed.
Alas, that beauty hangs her flowers
For lure of his demoniac powers:
Alas, that from these eyes should dart
Such piercing summons to thy heart;
That mine in frenzy of longing beats,
Still lusting for these gross deceits.
Not that way!

CRAZED

I know a pool where nightshade preens
Her poisonous fruitage in the moon;
Where the frail aspen her shadow leans
In midnight cold a-swoon.

I know a meadow flat with gold—
A million million burning flowers
In noon-sun's thirst their buds unfold
Beneath his blazing showers.

I saw a crazèd face, did I,
Stare from the lattice of a mill,
While the lank sails clacked idly by
High on the windy hill.

FOG

Stagnant this wintry gloom. Afar
The farm-cock bugles his 'Qui vive?'
The towering elms are lost in mist;

Birds in the thorn-trees huddle a-whist;
The mill-race waters grieve.
Our shrouded day
Dwindles away
To final black of eve.

Beyond these shades in space of air
Ride exterrestrial beings by?
Their colours burning rich and fair,
Where noon's sunned valleys lie?
With inaudible music are they sweet—
Bell, hoof, soft lapsing cry?

Turn marvellous faces, each to each?—
Lips innocent of sigh,
Or groan or fear, sorrow and grief,
Clear brow and falcon eye;
Bare foot, bare shoulder in the heat,
And hair like flax? Do their horses beat
Their way through wildernesses infinite
Of starry-crested trees, blue sward,
And gold-chasm'd mountain, steeply shored
O'er lakes of sapphire dye?

Mingled with lisping speech, faint laughter,
Echoes the Phoenix' scream of joyance
Mounting on high?—
Light-bathed vistas and divine sweet mirth,
Beyond dream of spirits penned to earth,
Condemned to pine and die? . . .
Hath serving Nature, bidden of the gods,
Thick-screened Man's narrow sky,
And hung these Stygian veils of fog
To hide his dingied sty?—
The gods who yet, at mortal birth,
Bequeathed him Fantasy?

THE IMAGINATION'S PRIDE

Be not too wildly amorous of the far,
  Nor lure thy fantasy to its utmost scope.
Read by a taper when the needling star
  Burns red with menace in heaven's midnight cope.
Friendly thy body: guard its solitude.
  Sure shelter is thy heart. It once had rest
Where founts miraculous thy lips endewed,
  Yet nought loomed further than thy mother's breast.

O brave adventure! Ay, at danger slake
  Thy thirst, lest life in thee should, sickening, quail;
But not toward nightmare goad a mind awake,
  Nor to forbidden horizons bend thy sail—
Seductive outskirts whence in trance prolonged
  Thy gaze, at stretch of what is sane-secure,
Dreams out on steeps by shapes demoniac thronged
  And vales wherein alone the dead endure.

Nectarous those flowers, yet with venom sweet.
  Thick-juiced with poison hang those fruits that shine
Where sick phantasmal moonbeams brood and beat,
  And dark imaginations ripe the vine.
Bethink thee: every enticing league thou wend
  Beyond the mark where life its bound hath set
Will lead thee at length where human pathways end
  And the dark enemy spreads his maddening net.

Comfort thee, comfort thee. Thy Father knows
  How wild man's ardent spirit, fainting, yearns
For mortal glimpse of death's immortal rose,
  The garden where the invisible blossom burns.
Humble thy trembling knees; confess thy pride;
  Be weary. Oh, whithersoever thy vaunting rove,
His deepest wisdom harbours in thy side,
  In thine own bosom hides His utmost love.

THE WANDERERS

Within my mind two spirits strayed
From out their still and purer air,
And there a moment's sojourn made;
As lovers will in woodlands bare.
Nought heeded they where now they stood,
Since theirs its alien solitude
Beyond imagination fair.

The light an earthly candle gives,
When it is quenched leaves only dark;
Theirs yet in clear remembrances lives
And, still within, I whispered, 'Hark';
As one who faintly on high has heard
The call note of a hidden bird
Even sweeter than the lark.

Yet 'twas their silence breathed only this—
'I love you.' As if flowers might say,
'Such is our natural fragrantness';
Or dewdrop at the break of day
Cry, 'Thus I beam.' Each turned a head,
But each its own clear radiance shed
With joy and peace at play.

So in a gloomy London street
Princes from Eastern realms might pause
In secret converse, then retreat.
Yet without haste passed these from sight;
As if a human mind were not
Wholly a dark and dismal spot—
At least in their own light.

THE UNFINISHED DREAM

Rare-sweet the air in that unimagined country—
My spirit had wandered far
From its weary body close-enwrapt in slumber
Where its home amd earth-friends are;

A milk-like air—and of light all abundance;
And there a river clear
Painting the scene like a picture on its bosom,
Green foliage drifting near.

No sign of life I saw, as I pressed onward,
Fish, nor beast, nor bird,
Till I came to a hill clothed in flowers to its summit,
Then shrill small voices I heard.

And I saw from concealment a company of elf-folk
With faces strangely fair,
Talking their unearthly scattered talk together,
A bind of green-grasses in their hair,

Marvellously gentle, feater far than children,
In gesture, mien and speech,
Hastening onward in translucent shafts of sunshine,
And gossiping each with each.

Straw-light their locks, on neck and shoulder falling,
Faint of almond the silks they wore,
Spun not of worm, but as if inwoven of moonbeams
And foam on rock-bound shore;

Like lank-legged grasshoppers in June-tide meadows,
Amalillios of the day,
Hungrily gazed upon by me—a stranger,
In unknown regions astray.

Yet, happy beyond words, I marked their sunlit faces,
Stealing soft enchantment from their eyes,
Tears in my own confusing their small image,
Hearkening their bead-like cries.

They passed me, unseeing, a waft of flocking linnets;
  Sadly I fared on my way;
And came in my dream to a dreamlike habitation,
  Close-shut, festooned, and grey.

Pausing, I gazed at the porch dust-still, vine-wreathèd,
  Worn the stone steps thereto,
Mute hung its bell, whence a stony head looked downward,
  Grey 'gainst the sky's pale-blue—

  Strange to me: strange. . . .

MUSIC

O restless fingers—not that music make!
Bidding old griefs from out the past awake,
And pine for memory's sake.

Those strings thou callest from quiet to yearn,
Of other hearts did hapless secrets learn,
And thy strange skill will turn

To uses that thy bosom dreams not of:
Ay, summon from their dark and dreadful grove
The chaunting, pale-checked votaries of love.

Stay now, and hearken! From that far-away
Cymbal on cymbal beats, the fierce horns bray,
Stars in their sapphire fade, 'tis break of day.

Green are those meads, foam-white the billow's crest,
And Night, withdrawing in the cavernous West,
Flings back her shadow on the salt sea's breast.

Snake-haired, snow-shouldered, pure as flame and dew,
Her strange gaze burning slumbrous eyelids through,
Rises the Goddess from the waves dark blue.

THE FAMILIAR

'Are you far away?'
'Yea, I am far—far;
Where the green wave shelves to the sand,
And the rainbows are;
And an ageless sun beats fierce
From an empty sky:
There, O thou Shadow forlorn,
Is the wraith of thee, I.'

'Are you happy, most Lone?'
'Happy, forsooth!
Who am eyes of the air; voice of the foam;
Ah, happy in truth.
My hair is astream, this cheek
Glistens like silver, and see,
As the gold to the dross, the ghost in the mirk,
I am calling to thee.'

'Nay, I am bound.
And your cry faints out in your mind.
Peace not on earth have I found,
Yet to earth am resigned.
Cease thy shrill mockery, Voice,
Nor answer again.'
'O Master, thick cloud shuts thee out
And cold tempests of rain.'

MAERCHEN

Soundless the moth-flit, crisp the death-watch tick;
Crazed in her shaken arbour bird did sing;
Slow wreathed the grease adown from soot-clogged wick:
  The Cat looked long and softly at the King.

Mouse frisked and scampered, leapt, gnawed, squeaked;
Small at the window looped cowled bat a-wing;
The dim-lit rafters with the night-mist reeked:
  The Cat looked long and softly at the King.

O wondrous robe enstarred, in night dyed deep:
O air scarce-stirred with the Court's far junketing:
O stagnant Royalty—A-swoon? Asleep?
The Cat looked long and softly at the King.

MIRAGE

. . . And burned the topless towers of Ilium

Strange fabled face! From sterile shore to shore
O'er plunging seas, thick-sprent with glistening brine,
The voyagers of the world with sail and heavy oar
Have sought thy shrine.
Beauty inexorable hath lured them on:
Remote unnamèd stars enclustering gleam—
Burn in thy flowered locks, though creeping daylight wan
Prove thee but dream.

Noonday to night the enigma of thine eyes
Frets with desire their travel-wearied brain,
Till in the vast of dark the ice-cold moon arise
And pour them peace again:
And with malign mirage uprears an isle
Of fountain and palm, and courts of jasmine and rose,
Whence far decoy of siren throats their souls beguile,
And maddening fragrance flows.

Lo, in the milken light, in tissue of gold
Thine apparition gathers in the air—
Nay, but the seas are deep, and the round world old,
And thou art named Despair.

FLOTSAM

Screamed the far sea-mew. On the mirroring sands
Bell-shrill the oyster-catchers. Burned the sky.
Couching my cheeks upon my sun-scorched hands,
Down from bare rock I gazed. The sea swung by

Dazzling dark blue and verdurous, quiet with snow,
Empty with loveliness, with music a-roar,
Her billowing summits heaving noon-aglow—
Crashed the Atlantic on the cliff-ringed shore.

Drowsed by the tumult of that moving deep,
Sense into outer silence fainted, fled;
And rising softly, from the fields of sleep,
Stole to my eyes a lover from the dead;

Crying an incantation—learned, Where? When? . . .
White swirled the foam, a fount, a blinding gleam
Of ice-cold breast, cruel eyes, wild mouth—and then
A still dirge echoing on from dream to dream.

MOURN'ST THOU NOW?

Long ago from radiant palace,
Dream-bemused, in flood of moon,
Stole the princess Seraphita
Into forest gloom.

Wail of hemlock; cold the dewdrops;
Danced the Dryads in the chace;
Heavy hung ambrosial fragrance;
Moonbeams blanched her ravished face.

Frail and clear the notes delusive;
Mocking phantoms in a rout
Thridded the night-cloistered thickets,
Wove their sorceries in and out. . . .

Mourn'st thou not? Or do thine eyelids
Frame a vision dark, divine,
O'er this imp of star and wild-flower—
Of a god once thine?

THE DECOY

'Tell us, O pilgrim, what strange She
Lures and decoys your wanderings on?
Cheek, eye, brow, lip, you scan each face,
Smile, ponder—and are gone.

'Are we not flesh and blood? Mark well,
We touch you with our hands. We speak
A tongue that may earth's secrets tell:
Why further will you seek?'

'Far have I come, and far must fare.
Noon and night and morning-prime,
I search the long road, bleak and bare,
That fades away in Time.

'On the world's brink its wild weeds shake,
And there my own dust, dark with dew,
Burns with a rose that, sleep or wake,
Beacons me—"Follow true!" '

'Her name, crazed soul? And her degree?
What peace, prize, profit in her breast?'
'A thousand cheating names hath she;
And none fore-tokens rest.'

SUNK LYONESSE

In sea-cold Lyonesse,
When the Sabbath eve shafts down
On the roofs, walls, belfries
Of the foundered town,
The Nereids pluck their lyres
Where the green translucency beats,
And with motionless eyes at gaze
Make minstrelsy in the streets.

And the ocean water stirs
In salt-worn casemate and porch.
Plies the blunt-snouted fish
With fire in his skull for torch.
And the ringing wires resound;
And the unearthly lovely weep,
In lament of the music they make
In the sullen courts of sleep:
Whose marble flowers bloom for aye:
And—lapped by the moon-guiled tide—
Mock their carver with heart of stone,
Caged in his stone-ribbed side.

BITTER WATERS

In a dense wood, a drear wood,
  Dark water is flowing;
Deep, deep, beyond sounding,
  A flood ever flowing.

There harbours no wild bird,
  No wanderer stays there;
Wreathed in mist, sheds pale Ishtar
  Her sorrowful rays there.

Take thy net; cast thy line;
  Manna sweet be thy baiting;
Time's desolate ages
  Shall still find thee waiting

For quick fish to rise there,
  Or butterfly wooing,
Or flower's honeyed beauty,
  Or wood-pigeon cooing.

Inland wellsprings are sweet;
  But to lips, parched and dry,
Salt, salt is the savour
  Of these; faint their sigh.

Bitter Babylon's waters.
  Zion, distant and fair.
We hanged up our harps
  On the trees that are there.

THE OWL

What if to edge of dream,
When the spirit is come,
Shriek the hunting owl,
And summon it home—
To the fear-stirred heart
And the ancient dread
Of man, when cold root or stone
Pillowed roofless head?

Clangs not at last the hour
When roof shelters not;
And the ears are deaf,
And all fears forgot:
Since the spirit too far has fared
For summoning scream
Of any strange fowl on earth
To shatter its dream?

THE VISIONARY

There is a pool whose waters clear
Reflect not what is standing near;
The silver-banded birch, the grass
Find not therein a looking-glass;
Nor doth Orion, pacing night,
Scatter thereon his wintry light.
Nor ever to its darnelled brink
Comes down the hare or deer to drink;
Sombre and secret it doth keep
Stilled in unshaken, crystal sleep.

But once, a Wanderer, parched, forlorn,
Worn with night-wayfaring, came at morn,
By pathless thickets grey with dew;
And stooping at its margent blue
To lave his wearied eyes, discerned
Somewhat that in the water burned—
A face like amber, pale and still,
With eyes of light, unchangeable,
Whose grave and steadfast scrutiny
Pierced through all earthly memory.
Voiceless and windless the green wood,
Above its shadowy quietude,
Sighed faintly through its unfading leaves;
And still he stooped; and still he yearned
To kiss the lips that therein burned;
To close those eyes that from the deep
Gazed on him, wearied out for sleep.

He drank; he slumbered; and he went
Back into life's wild banishment,
Like one whose every thought doth seem
The wreckage of a wasting dream;
All savour gone from life, delight
Charged with foreboding dark as night;
Love but the memory of what
Woke once, but reawakens not.

THE OUTSKIRTS

The night was cloyed with flowers
In the darkness deep and sweet,
When, at the window of the World,
I heard the dancing feet;
And viol and tambour
Made musical the air,
While yet a voice within me cried,
Beware!

My eyes upon the glow were set
From out that thorny grot:
I hungered for the lips and eyes
And hearts remembering not;
And still the thrill and thud beat on
With sorcery in the air;
And, luring, leaping, called to me,
Beware!

O all you hapless souls, like birds
Within night's branching may,
Hearken the words of him who speaks,
And fly from hence—away.
These dancers with their wiles and gauds,
That music on the air—
'Tis the swart Fowler with his nets
To play you false, though fair;
Hearken—an outcast I—I cry,
Beware!

TOM'S ANGEL

No one was in the fields
But me and Polly Flint,
When, like a giant across the grass,
The flaming angel went.

It was budding time in May,
And green as green could be,
And all in his height he went along
Past Polly Flint and me.

We'd been playing in the woods,
And Polly up, and ran,
And hid her face, and said,
'Tom! Tom! The Man! The Man!'

And I up-turned; and there,
Like flames across the sky,
With wings all bristling, came
The Angel striding by.

And a chaffinch overhead
Kept whistling in the tree
While the Angel, blue as fire, came on
Past Polly Flint and me.

And I saw his hair, and all
The ruffling of his hem,
As over the clovers his bare feet
Trod without stirring them.

Polly—she cried; and, oh!
We ran, until the lane
Turned by the miller's roaring wheel,
And we were safe again.

THE IMAGE

Faint sighings sounded, not of wind, amid
That chasmed waste of boulder and cactus flower,
Primeval sand its sterile coverlid,
Unclocked eternity its passing hour.

Naught breathed or stirred beneath its void of blue,
Save when in far faint dying whisper strained
Down the sheer steep, where not even lichen grew,
Eroded dust, and, where it fell, remained.

Hewn in that virgin rock, nude 'gainst the skies,
Loomed mighty Shape—of granite brow and breast,
Its huge hands folded on its sightless eyes,
Its lips and feet immovably at rest.

Where now the wanderers who this image scored
For age-long idol here?—Death? Destiny? Fame?—
Mute, secret, dreadful, and by man adored;
Yet not a mark in the dust to tell its name?

THE STRANGE SPIRIT

Age shall not daunt me, nor sorrow for youth that is gone,
If thou lead on before me;
If thy voice in the darkness and bleak of that final night
Still its enchantment weave o'er me.
Thou hauntest the stealing shadow of rock and tree;
Hovering on wings invisible smilest at me;
Fannest the secret scent of the moth-hung flower;
Making of musky eve thy slumber-bower.

But not without danger thy fleeting presence abides
In a mind lulled in dreaming.
Lightning bepictures thy gaze. When the thunder raves,
And the tempest rain is streaming,
Betwixt cloud and earth thy falcon-head leans near—
Menacing earth-bound spirit betrayed to fear.
Cold then as shadow of death, that icy glare
Pierces the window of sense to the chamber bare.

Busied o'er dust, engrossed o'er the clod-close root,
Fire of the beast in conflict bleeding,
Goal of the coursing fish on its ocean tryst,
Wind of the weed's far seeding,
Whose servant art thou? Who gave thee earth, sky and sea
For uttermost kingdom and ranging? Who bade thee to be
Bodiless, lovely; snare, and delight of the soul,
Fantasy's beacon, of thought the uttermost goal?

When I told my love thou wert near, she bowed, and sighed.
With passion her pale face darkened.
Trembling the lips that to mine in silence replied;
Sadly that music she hearkened.
Miracle thine the babe in her bosom at rest,
Flowerlike, hidden loose-folded on gentle breast—
And we laughed together in quiet, unmoved by fear,
Knowing that, life of life, thou wast hovering near.

INCANTATION

Vervain . . . basil . . . orison—
Whisper their syllablings till all meaning is gone,
And sound all vestige loses of mere word. . . .
'Tis then as if, in some far childhood heard,
A wild heart languished at the call of a bird,
Crying through ruinous windows, high and fair,
A secret incantation on the air:
A language lost; which, when its accents cease,
Breathes, voiceless, of a pre-Edenic peace.

CLAVICHORD

Hearken! Tiny, clear, discrete:
The listener within deems solely his,
A music so remote and sweet
It all but lovely as silence is.

THE ASSIGNATION

Echoes of voices stilled may linger on
Until a lapse of utter quiet steal in;
As 'tis hushed daybreak—the dark night being gone—
That calls small birds their matins to begin. . . .

Felled with such sickness I had lain that life
Nightmare's phantasmagoria seemed to be.
Alas, poor body, racked with woe and strife,
Its very weakness set my spirit free.

Wondrous the regions then through which I strayed,
Spectre invisible as the wind and air,
Regions that midnight fantasy had made,
And clear cold consciousness can seldom share.

But of these wanderings one remembered best
Nothing exotic showed—no moon-drenched vale,
Where in profound ravines dark forests rest,
The wild-voiced cataracts their nightingale;

But only a sloping meadow, rimed with frost;
Bleak pollard willows, and a frozen brook,
All tinkle of its waters hushed and lost,
Its sword-sharp rushes by the wind forsook:

An icy-still, grey-heavened, vacant scene,
With whin and marron hummocked, and flowerless gorse. . . .
And in that starven upland's winter green,
Stood grazing in the silence a white horse.

No marvel of beauty, or strangeness, or fable, this—
Una—la Belle Dame—hero—or god might ride;
Worn, aged with time and toil, and now at peace,
It cropped earth's sweetmeats on the stark hill's side.

Spellbound, I watched it—hueless mane and tail
Like wraith of foam upon an un-named sea;
Until, as if at mute and inward hail,
It raised its gentle head and looked at me—

Eyes blue as speedwell, tranquil, morning-fair:
It was as if for aeons these and I
Had planned this mystic assignation there,
In this lone waste, beneath that wintry sky. . . .

Strange is man's soul, which solace thus can win,
When the poor body lies at woe's extreme—
Yea, even where the shades of death begin—
In secret symbol, and painted by a dream!

DREAMS

Ev'n one who has little travelled in
This world of ample land and sea;
Whose Arctic, Orient, tropics have been—
Like Phœnix, siren, jinn, and *Sidhe*—
But of his thoughts' anatomy—
Each day makes measureless journeys twain;
From wake to dream; to wake again,

At night he climbs a quiet stair,
Secure within its pictured wall;
His clothes, his hands, the light, the air,
Familiar objects one and all—
Accustomed, plain, and natural.
He lays him down: and, ages deep,
Flow over him the floods of sleep.

Lapped in this influence alien
To aught save sorcery could devise,
Heedless of *Sesame* or *Amen*,
He is at once the denizen
Of realms till then beyond surmise;
Grotesque, irrational, and sans
All law and order known as Man's.

Though drowsy sentries at the gate
Of eye and ear dim watch maintain,
And, at his absence all elate,
His body's artisans sustain
Their toil in sinew, nerve, and brain:
Nothing recks he; he roves afar,
Past compass, chart, and calendar.

Nor is he the poor serf who shares
One self alone where'er he range,
Since in the seven-league Boots he wears
He may, in scores of guises, change
His daily ego—simple or strange;
Stand passive looker-on; or be
A paragon of energy.

Regions of beauty, wonder, peace
By waking eyes unscanned, unknown.
Waters and hills whose loveliness,
Past mortal sense, are his alone.
There flow'rs by the shallows of Lethe sown
Distil their nectar, drowsy and sweet,
And drench the air with news of it.

Or lost, betrayed, forlorn, alas!
Gaunt terror leads him by the hand
Through demon-infested rank morass;
O'er wind-bleached wilderness of sand;
Where cataracts rave; or bleak sea-strand
Shouts at the night with spouted spume;
Or locks him to rot in a soundless tomb.

Here, too, the House of Folly is,
With gates ajar, and windows lit,
Wherein with foul buffooneries
A spectral host carousing sit.
'Hail, thou!' they yelp. 'Come, taste and eat!'
And so, poor zany, sup must he
The nightmare dregs of idiocy.

All this in vain? Nay, thus abased,
Made vile in the dark's incontinence,
Though even the anguish of death he taste,
The murder's woe—his penitence,
And pangs of the damned experience—
Will he God's mercy less esteem
When dayspring prove them only a dream?

What bliss to clutch, when thus beset,
The folded linen of his sheet;
Or hear, without, more welcome yet,
A footfall in the dawnlit street;
The whist of the wind; or, far and sweet,
Some small bird's daybreak rhapsody,
That bids him put all figments by.

Oh, when, at morning up, his eyes
Open to earth again, then, lo!
An end to all dream's enterprise!—
It melts away like April snow.
What night made false now true doth show;
What day discloses night disdained;
And who shall winnow real from feigned?

But men of learning little heed
Problems that simple folk perplex;
And some there are who have decreed
Dreams the insidious wiles of sex;
That slumber's plain is wake's complèx;
And, plumbing their own minds, profess
Them quagmires of unconsciousness.

Sad fate it is, like one who is dead,
To lie inert the long night through,
And never by dream's sweet fantasy led
To lave tired eyes in heavenly dew!
But worse—the prey of a gross taboo
And sport of a Censor—to squat and make
Pies of a mud forbidd'n the awake!

Nay, is that Prince of the Dust—a man,
But a tissue of parts, dissectible?
Lancet, balances. callipers—can
The least of his actions by human skill
Be measured as so much Sex, Want, Will?—
Fables so dull would the sweeter be
With extract of humour for company!

Once was a god whose lovely face,
Wan as the poppy and arched in wings,
So haunted a votary with his grace
And the still wonder that worship brings,
That, having sipped of Helicon's springs,
He casts his beauty in bronze. And now
Eternal slumber bedims his brow—

Hypnos: and Dream was his dear son.
Not ours these follies. We haunt instead
Tropical jungles drear and dun,
And see in some fetish of fear and dread
Our symbol of dream—that brooding head!
And deem the wellspring of genius hid
In a dark morass that is dubbed the Id.

Sacred of old was the dyed baboon,
Though least, of the monkeys, like man is he.
Yet, rank the bones of his skeleton
With *homo sapiens*': will they be
Void of design, form, symmetry?
To each his calling. Albeit we know
Apes father no Michelangelo!

In truth, a destiny undivined
Haunts every cell of bone and brain;
They share, to time and space resigned,
All passions that to earth pertain,
And twist man's thoughts to boon or bane;
Yet, be he master, need we ban
What the amoeba's made of man?

Who of his thoughts can reach the source?
Who in his life-blood's secret share?
By knowledge, artifice, or force
Compel the self within declare
What fiat bade it earthward fare?
Or proof expound this journey is
Else than a tissue of fantasies?

See, now, this butterfly, its wing
A dazzling play of patterned hues;
Far from the radiance of Spring,
From every faltering flower it choose
'Twill dip to sip autumnal dews:
So flit man's happiest moments by,
Daydreams of selfless transiency.

Was it by cunning the curious fly
That preys in a sunbeam schooled her wings
To ride her in air all motionlessly,
Poised on their myriad winnowings?
Where conned the blackbird the song he sings?
Was Job the instructor of the ant?
Go bees for nectar to Hume and Kant?

Who bade the scallop devise her shell?
Who tutored the daisy at cool of eve
To tent her pollen in floreted cell?
What dominie taught the dove to grieve;
The mole to delve; the worm to weave?
Does not the rather their life-craft seem
A tranced obedience to a dream?

Thus tranced, too, body and mind, will sit
A winter's dawn to dark, alone,
Heedless of how the cold moments flit,
The worker in words, or wood, or stone:
So far his waking desires have flown
Into a realm where his sole delight
Is to bring the dreamed-of to mortal sight.

Dumb in its wax may the music sleep—
In a breath conceived—that, with ardent care,
Note by note, in a reverie deep,
Mozart penned, for the world to share.
Waken it, needle! And then declare
How, invoked by thy tiny tang,
Sound such strains as the Sirens sang!

Voyager dauntless on Newton's sea,
Year after year still brooding on
His algebraical formulae,
The genius of William Hamilton
Sought the square root of *minus* one;
In vain; till—all thought of it leagues away—
The problem flowered from a dream one day.

Our restless senses leap and say,
'How marvellous this!—How ugly that!'
And, at a breath, will slip away
The very thing they marvel at.
Time is the tyrant of their fate;
And frail the instant which must be
Our all of actuality.

If then to Solomon the Wise
Some curious priest stooped low and said,
'Thou, with thy lidded, sleep-sealed eyes,
This riddle solve from out thy bed:
Art thou—am I—by phantoms led?
Where is the real? In dream? Or wake?'
I know the answer the King might make!

And teeming Shakespeare: would he avow
The creatures of his heart and brain,
Whom, Prospero-like, he could endow
With all that mortal souls contain,
Mere copies that a fool can feign
Out of the tangible and seen?—
This the sole range of his demesne?

Ask not the Dreamer! See him run,
Listening a shrill and gentle neigh,
Foot into stirrup, he is up, he has won
Enchanted foothills far away.
Somewhere? Nowhere? Who need say?
So be it in secrecy of his mind
He some rare delectation find.

Ay, once I dreamed of an age-wide sea
Whereo'er three moons stood leper-bright;
And once—from agony set free—
I scanned within the womb of night,
A hollow inwoven orb of light,
Thrilling with beauty no tongue could tell,
And knew it for Life's citadel.

And—parable as strange—once, I
Was lured to a city whose every stone,
And harpy human hastening by
Were spawn and sport of fear alone—
By soulless horror enthralled, driven on:
Even the waters that, ebon-clear,
Coursed through its dark, raved only of *Fear*!

Enigmas these; but not the face,
Fashioned of sleep, which, still at gaze
Of daybreak eyes, I yet could trace,
Made lovelier in the sun's first rays;
Nor that wild voice which in amaze,
Wide-wok'n, I listened singing on—
All memory of the singer gone.

O Poesy, of wellspring clear,
Let no sad Science thee suborn,
Who art thyself its planisphere!
All knowledge is foredoomed, forlorn—
Of inmost truth and wisdom shorn—
Unless imagination brings
Its skies wherein to use its wings.

Two worlds have we: without; within;
But all that sense can mete and span,
Until it confirmation win
From heart and soul, is death to man.
Of grace divine his life began;
And—Eden empty proved—in deep
Communion with his spirit in sleep

The Lord Jehovah of a dream
Bade him, past all desire, conceive
What should his solitude redeem;
And, to his sunlit eyes, brought Eve.
Would that my day-wide mind could weave
Faint concept of the scene from whence
She awoke to Eden's innocence!

Starven with cares, like tares in wheat,
Wildered with knowledge, chilled with doubt,
The timeless self in vain must beat
Against its walls to hasten out
Whither the living waters fount;
And—evil and good no more at strife—
Seek love beneath the tree of life.

When then in memory I look back
To childhood's visioned hours I see
What now my anxious soul doth lack
Is energy in peace to be
At one with nature's mystery:
And Conscience less my mind indicts
For idle days than dreamless nights.

INDEX OF TITLES

INDEX OF FIRST LINES

Members of College Teaching Staff can borrow ten books at a time and can retain these for one month.

A student of the college can borrow one book at a time, and can retain it for 14 days.

Books in any way injured or lost shall be paid for or replaced by the borrower.